

THE Atlantic

APRIL 2001 MONTHLY

The Next Ruling Class

Meet the Organization Kid

BY DAVID BROOKS

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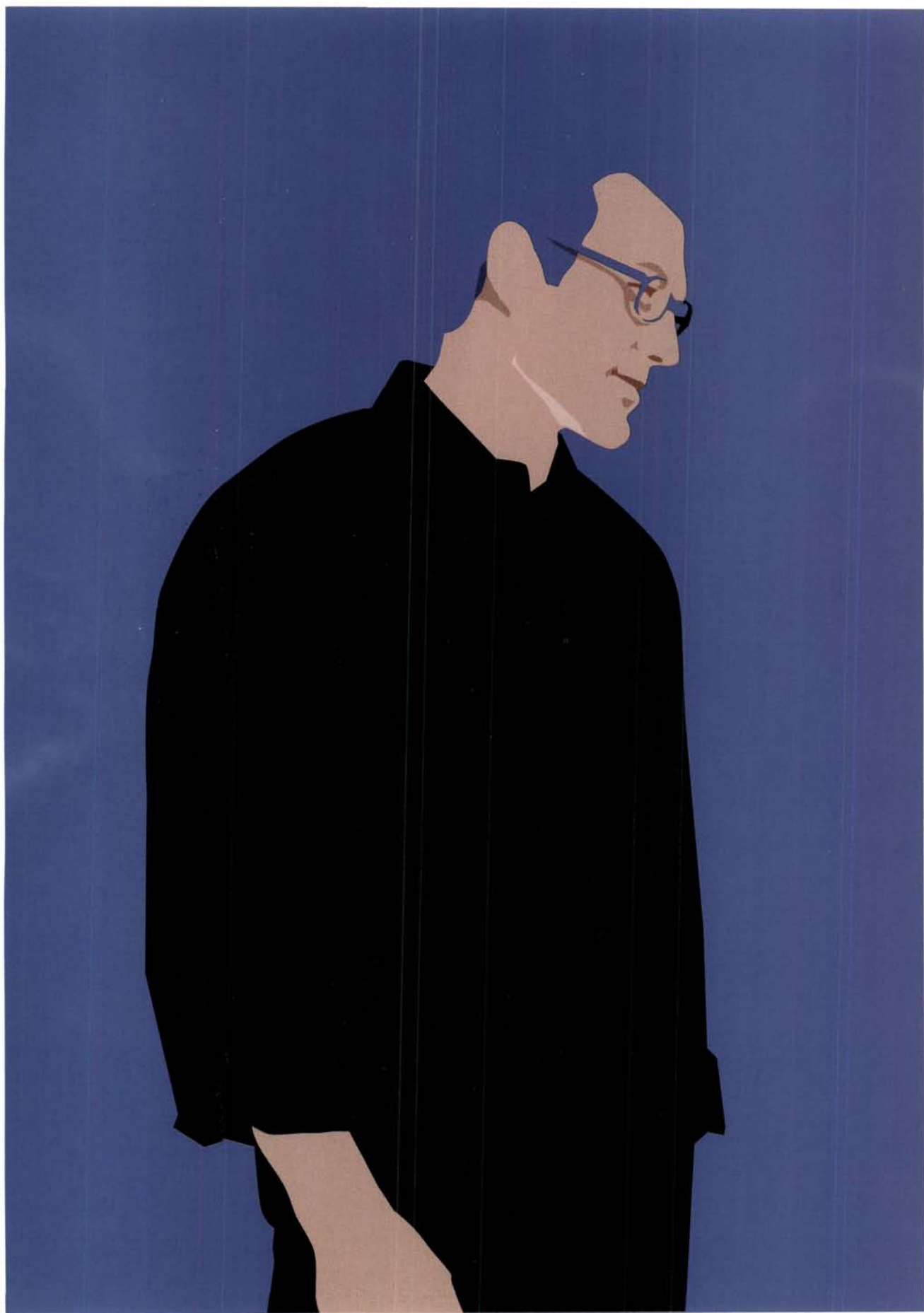
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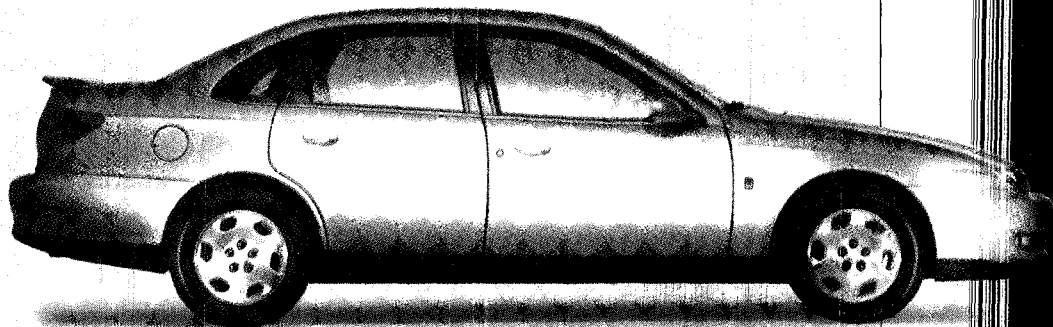
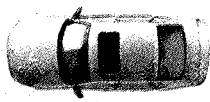
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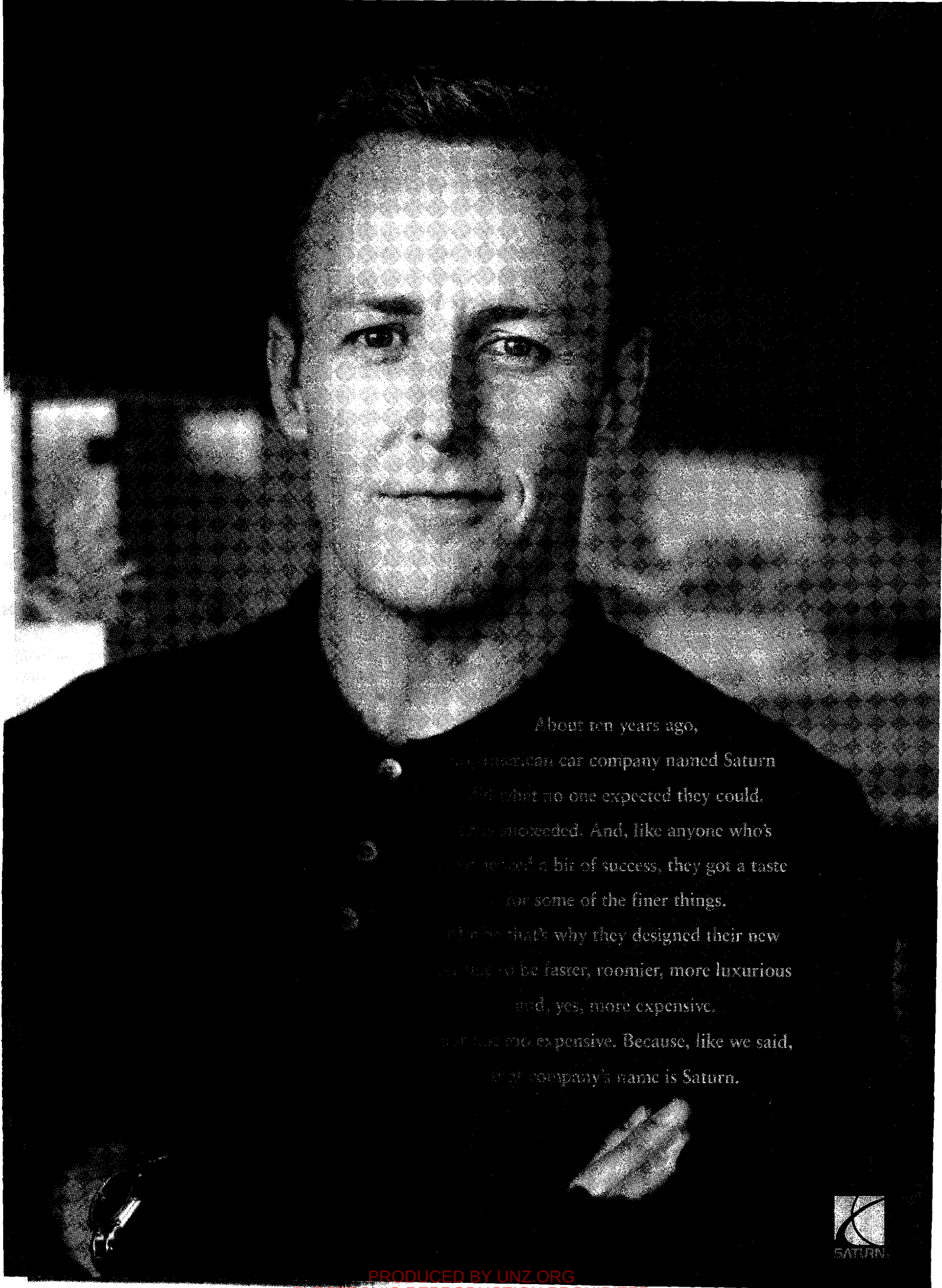
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THE Atlantic

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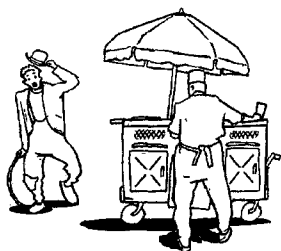
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Cover art by Tim O'Brien; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai



77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

David Brooks, the chronicler of new social structures who gave the world Bobos (“bourgeois bohemians”), writes in this issue about the next generation of the meritocratic overclass: the superachieving young men and women in elite schools. Brooks liked the young people he recently spent a lot of time with, mostly at Princeton. He writes, “We have in America a generation of students who are extraordinarily bright, morally earnest, and incredibly industrious. They like to study and socialize in groups. They create and join organizations with great enthusiasm. They are responsible, safety-conscious, and mature.” The archetype at the schools and colleges where the next leadership class is being groomed, Brooks says, is not the student-lounge revolutionary or the cynic or the slacker but the Organization Kid.

Brooks’s article is first of all an attempt to describe the making of the Organization Kid. The story he tells is of a cheerful, driven soul whose life from conception on has been quite consciously shaped by parents who believe that a child of the right nature given the right sort of nurture—Mozart in the womb, Car Seat Gallery flash cards, an endless line of afternoons spent in an endless succession of extracurricular classes—will properly end up where he or she was meant to end up: at the very pleasant top of America’s vast heap.

As Brooks says, this makes for a childhood that is on one hand filled with boundless opportunity and on the other oddly barren. The barren part concerns what used to be called play. Where we once had play, we now have an oxymoronic portmanteau, the play date. A play date is to play as a study date is to a date. Anything that is organized and controlled by parents is definitionally not “play.”

A lot of parents, I suspect, harbor a sense that we are doing something wrong here—that for the best reasons, with the best of intentions, we are robbing our children of the experience of being children. A childhood in which children are not allowed to occupy their own world of self-inflicted danger and subversive behavior and minor criminal activity for at least several glorious hours a day is in some ways not a childhood at all.

But we persist. Why? One reason is that Americans are, by and large, absurdly rich. Rich people have always sought to shield their children from the great and little dangers of

life in a way that nonrich people have always viewed as silly. Now that “everyone” is, so to speak, rich, there is no one left to laugh at us, so we can easily forget that we are making ourselves figures of fun.

The natural preoccupation of a wealthy society with averting risk affects more than humor writing: it has profound implications for politics and governance. In any contest of ideas in such a society, the position that favors the least risk almost invariably wins.

Imagine yourself the parent of a six-year-old. You are watching your beloved ride his little bike. He is wearing his helmet; he has never ridden his bike or anything else without his helmet. In a moment of weakly held and dimly

understood rebellion, you say to the other parent of the beloved that it would be nice to let the poor wretch ride sometime feeling the wind in his hair. The other parent points out, politely but firmly, that 1,000 or 10,000 or whatever number it is children who ride without helmets suffer head injuries every year. Your position, in other words, is that you are prepared, for no good reason, to see your child suffer a terrible, possibly fatal, injury. This is not a tenable position.

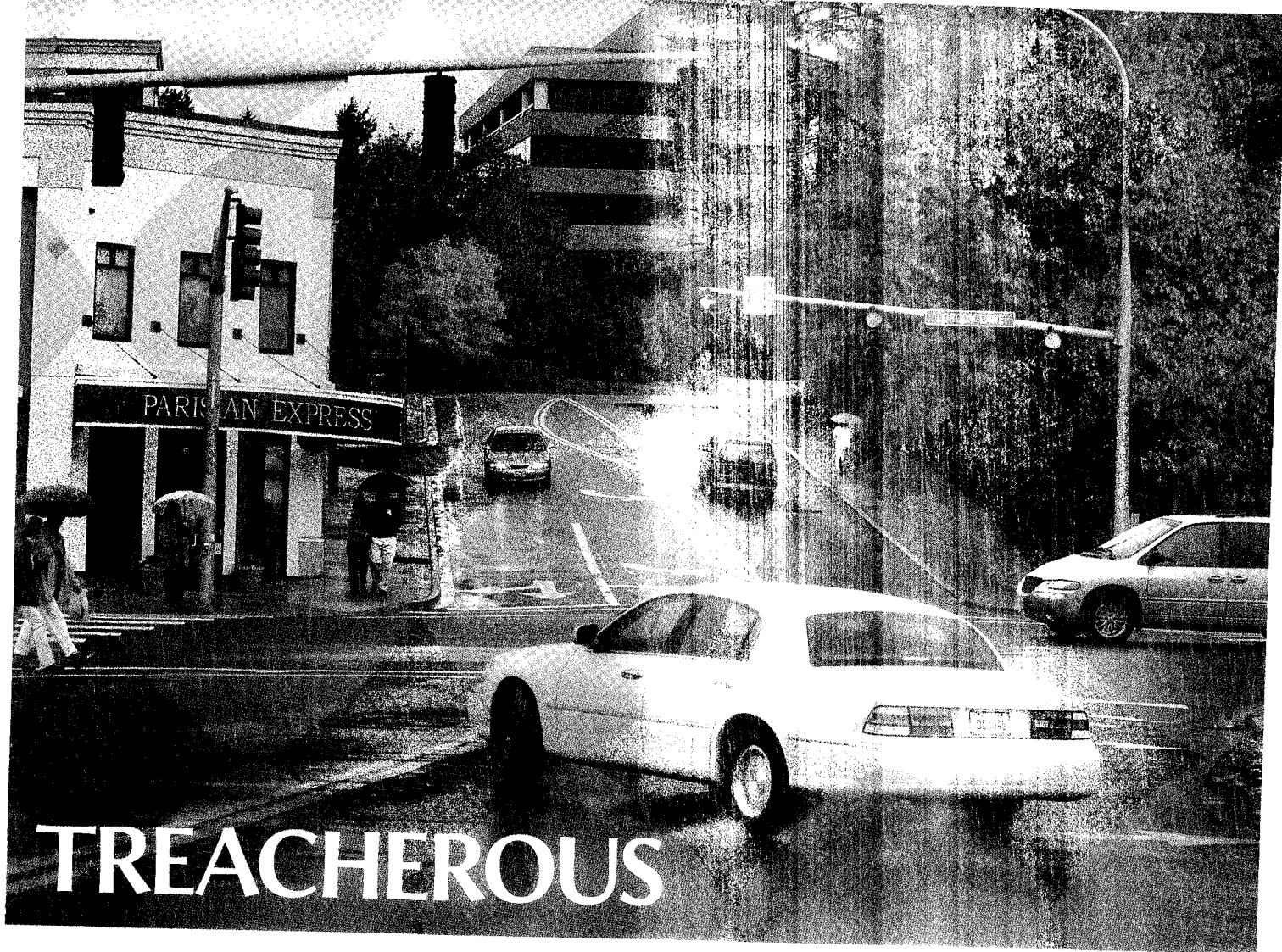
Thus it is on the larger scale of government and law. No matter how ill-considered the law, no matter how deleterious to individual freedom, no matter how little sense it makes in terms of cost-benefit risk analysis, the battle is over and the law is as good as passed the moment these words are uttered: “If only one life is saved . . .” And no doubt this is a good thing. I’m certainly not going to be the one who takes a position otherwise, and my sons are going to wear their helmets every day of their lives.

.....

It has been called to our attention that a photo illustration in the December, 2000, issue, on the opening page of the article “A New Way to Be Mad,” bears considerable similarity to a 1989 painting by the illustrator Brad Holland which has been published in several prominent venues. The similarity is indeed striking. We believe it to be unintended and coincidental, but we regret the appearance of duplication. Holland’s work has long been highly regarded by this magazine, and his distinguished illustrations include a number of award-winning paintings for *The Atlantic Monthly*. —MICHAEL KELLY



David Brooks



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IN THIS ISSUE

Young people at today's elite colleges and universities bear no resemblance to the disaffected student revolutionaries of recent decades. Workaholic, happy to toe the line, they seem convinced of—and content with—the order of the universe. How in the world did they get this way? **David Brooks** ("The Organization Kid") investigates. Brooks is a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*. His book *Bobos in Paradise* (2000), which heralded the rise of bourgeois-bohemian culture, was reviewed in *The Atlantic* last June.

In the heart of downtown Butte, Montana, lies a lake of sulfuric acid a mile and a half across and 900 feet deep. A legacy of decades of open-pit mining, it may hold the key to the city's revitalization, reports the *Atlantic* correspondent **William Langewiesche** ("The Profits of Doom"). Langewiesche's profile of the wine critic Robert Parker appeared in the December *Atlantic*.

Twenty years ago John W. Hinckley Jr. attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan. Transcripts of recordings made by **Richard V. Allen** ("The Day Reagan Was Shot"), Reagan's national security adviser, disclose for the first time the discussion that ensued in the White House in the hours immediately following the event. Allen is an international business consultant in Washington, D.C.

Steve Olson ("The Genetic Archaeology of Race") reports on the rocky history of the Human Genome Diversity Project, whose goal of tracing human history through genetic variation may be our best hope of disarming racism once and for all—if the project survives its critics' attacks. Olson has written for numerous publications, including *Science*, *The Washingtonian*, and *The Washington Monthly*. He is at work on a book about the genetic history of humanity.

Jim Shepard ("The Gun Lobby") teaches in the English department at Williams College. He has written five novels, including *Nosferatu* (1998), and a collection of short stories, *Batting Against Castro* (1996).

Alicia Ostriker ("The Kiss of Judas") teaches English and creative writing at Rutgers University. Her most recent volume of poetry, *The Little Space: Poems Selected and New* (1998), was a finalist for the National Book Award.

Passengers intending to misbehave on a transatlantic flight, be forewarned: you could find yourself making an unplanned stopover. **Wayne Curtis** ("Uncivil Aviation") reports from Bangor, Maine, an unofficial holding pen for travelers subdued after a bout of air rage. Also in Notes & Dispatches this month: **Jeffrey Tayler**, from the Russian Far East, on a border region's economic rapprochement; **Witold Rybczynski**, from Scranton, Pennsylvania, on a re-created landscape by Frederick Law Olmsted; **Francine Prose**, from Padua, on how preserving art for the future can ruin it for the present; and **Tyler Maroney**, from Gibraltar, on the latest twist in the custody battle over the Rock.

Skirting American patriotic revisionism and guides in powdered wigs, the Englishman **Geoffrey Wheatcroft** ("A Revolutionary Itinerary") takes readers on a more nuanced tour of the historic battlefields of Massachusetts and New York. Wheatcroft, the literary editor of the weekly *Spectator* from 1977 to 1981, is a frequent contributor to *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, and *The New York Times*, as well as *The Atlantic*.

Imagine trying to cook a meal in the dead of winter using only fresh foods found locally—in the northern parts of the country. The *Atlantic* senior editor **Corby**

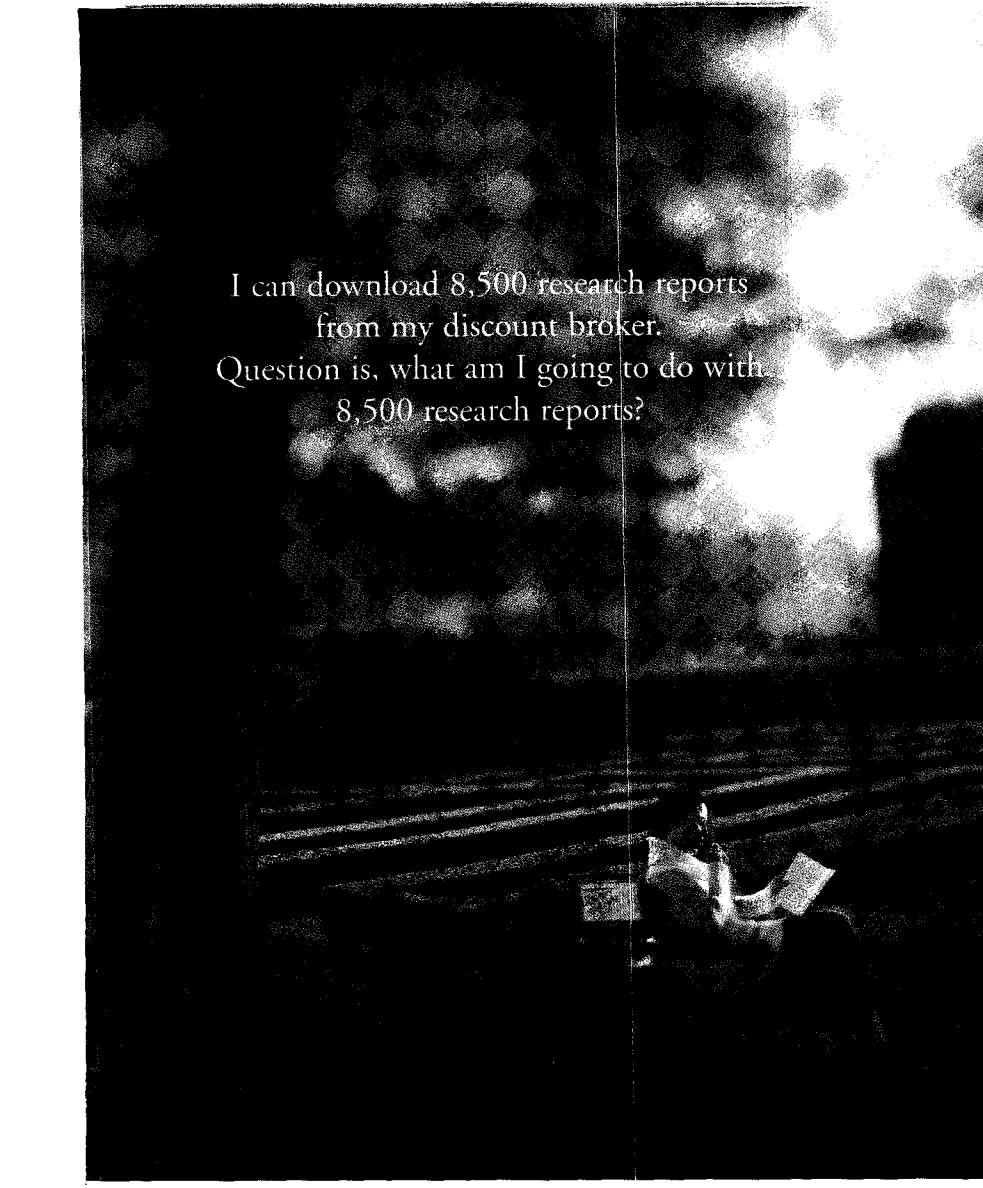
Kummer ("In Lockstep With the Seasons") follows in the footsteps of cooks who subject themselves to such limits and finds they may be on to something.

What goes into making a good rocking chair? **Marshall Jon Fisher** ("The Ergonomic Rocking Chair") visits the workshops of a handful of renowned studio-furniture artists who have transformed rocking into a science. Fisher is a co-author, with his father, David E. Fisher, of *Tube: The Invention of Television* (1996).

Given the scope of a life, most biographers are obliged to regard their subjects with a wide-angle lens rather than a microscope. **Juliet Barker** ("A Year in the Life") surveys John Worthen's *The Gang: Coleridge, the Hutchinsons, and the Wordsworths in 1802*, a group biography offering a detailed look at an extraordinary moment of creative collaboration. Barker is the author of *The Brontës* (1994) and *Wordsworth: A Life* (2000).

Three decades after her death, little note is taken of Carson McCullers, whose first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, made her a celebrity at the age of twenty-three. **Frances Kiernan** ("No Apologies Necessary") considers a new biography of McCullers by the *Le Monde* editor Josyane Savigneau. Kiernan, a fiction editor of *The New Yorker* for fifteen years, is the author of *Seeing Mary Plain: A Life of Mary McCarthy* (2000).

The radical Oxford academic Alan Taylor made a career of dissent, earning himself a reputation as a brilliant gadfly. **Paul Kennedy** ("The Nonconformist") reviews Kathleen Burk's *Troublemaker: The Life and History of A.J.P. Taylor*, the latest biography of modern European history's most troubling contrarian. Kennedy is the Dilworth Professor of History and the director of international-security studies at Yale University.



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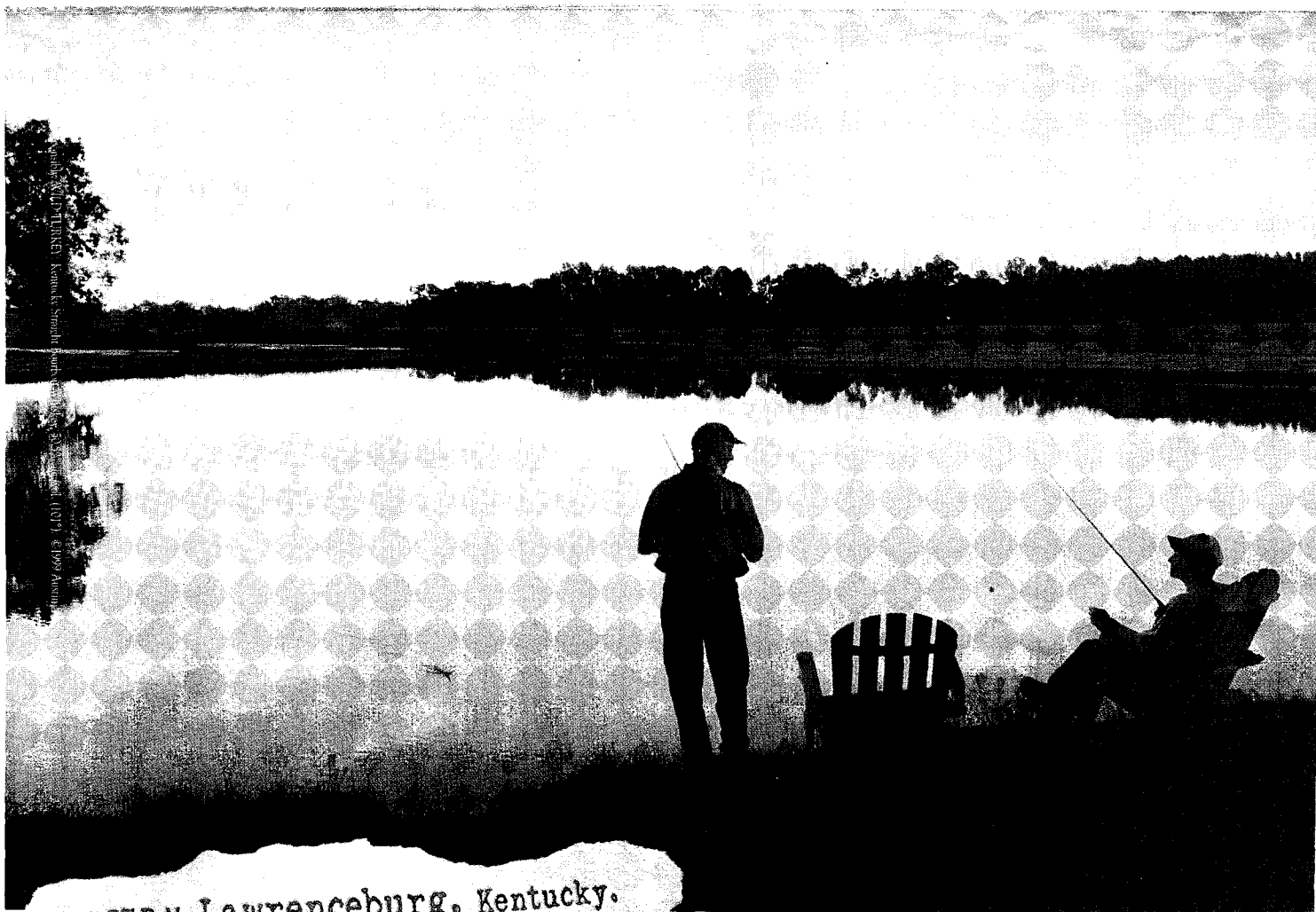
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Scholars and the Goddess

What a curious article Charlotte Allen has written on Wicca, the Goddess movement, and neopaganism ("The Scholars and the Goddess," January *Atlantic*). She has gotten quite a bit right, though she gets entangled in the various threads of these movements. For instance, not all Wiccans worship a goddess, though certainly some do, and there is no official orthodoxy of belief, though there is some common ground, or at least a somewhat common reading list, which Allen hacks to pieces.

Allen sets up Gerald Gardner as the earliest source of these movements and then debunks him as a liar. Yet almost everyone who knows about Gardner, except possibly the most naive, also knows that Gardner probably made up the coven he says taught him about Wicca. This has been part of the conversation since the 1970s, and therefore has nothing to do, as Allen insists it does, with debunking books written in the 1990s. Gardner's sources are just not the point for modern followers; people derive religious satisfaction from the movement's community and rituals, which were greatly inspired by the second wave of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

Allen emphasizes the absence of historical evidence for the worship of "a single, archetypal goddess." This is not news. The Goddess movement is polytheistic, a religious movement that purposely flies in the face of male-dominated monotheisms such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Most tellingly, Allen cites Matilda Joslyn Gage, misidentifying her as a "British feminist"—Gage was born and raised in upstate New York and, along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton

and Susan B. Anthony, was one of the founders of the women's suffrage movement.

Serinity Young
New York, N.Y.

Although Charlotte Allen interviewed me and others at great length for this article, she seems to have missed the core insights and perspective of Goddess spirituality.

Goddess religion is not based on history, archaeology, or belief in any Great Goddess past or present. Our spirituality is based on experience, on a direct relationship with the cycles of birth, growth, death, and regeneration in nature and in human lives. We see the complex, interwoven web of life as sacred, which is to say real and important, worth protecting, worth taking a stand for.

Starhawk
San Francisco, Calif.

Though she decries the use of myth, Charlotte Allen perpetuates the myth-history that Gerald Gardner was the founder of Wicca. Wiccans owe much to Gardner, but he was not Wicca's founder.

When we first articulated the spiritual philosophy of Wicca, in the late 1960s, many members of the Wiccan community examined and hotly criticized our work. We fine-tuned our writings to reflect the community's wishes. In 1974, at an international gathering in Minneapolis, Wicca was consensually defined as a nonjudgmental religion that honored all positive spiritual paths. That Minneapolis group might be considered the founders of Wicca.

S. Gavin Frost and Yvonne Frost
Co-founders
Church and School of Wicca
Hinton, W. Va.

Learning that "the 'ancient' rituals of the Goddess movement are almost certainly bunk" was quite a revelation when I read it on Christmas, a day of post-shopping rituals celebrating the birth of Jesus, a date that scholars believe is almost certainly bunk. The similarities between Wicca and Christianity, and the ability of believers in each to overlook facts in the pursuit of godliness, seem to establish Wicca as being little different from its colleagues in the religion business.

John K. Wilson
Chicago, Ill.

Charlotte Allen replies:

My article aimed to "debunk" not the religious validity of Goddess worship but its claim to be the ur-religion of Stone Age Europe. Christianity may be entirely false, but it's definitely 2,000 years old; Goddess spirituality, in contrast, may be entirely true, but it's not 35,000 or even 350 years old. If the Frosts are correct about the official birth of Wicca at a Minneapolis convention, it's not even thirty-five years old. Thus it is irrelevant (contra John K. Wilson) whether Jesus was actually born on December 25; the point is that there is solid historical evidence that Christians were celebrating his birthday on that date as early as the fourth century. But the historical and archaeological record simply does not support the conclusion that either Stone Age Europe or the Stone Age Near East ever celebrated the Great Goddess, much less that any Goddess rituals survived to modern times. In response to Starhawk and Serinity Young: I carefully pointed out that many Wiccans find their religion intensely meaningful and self-empowering, regardless of its lack of antiquity. As for the nationality of Matilda Joslyn Gage, Serinity Young is correct.

CHRIS MEAGHER
DRIVETRAIN ENGINEER

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Indoctrinologists

Sally Satel ("The Indoctrinologists Are Coming," January *Atlantic*) has never written to the *American Journal of Public Health* disputing the results of the 1996 study I published therein exploring the hypothesis that experiences of racial discrimination might be related to risk of elevated blood pressure. She instead raises the absurd criticism that the study failed to control for salt intake. Exposing her lack of understanding of rigorous epidemiological methods, this "criticism" neatly misses the point that controlling for salt intake would be relevant only if salt intake were related to both the exposure of interest (racial discrimination) and the outcome of interest (blood pressure). Unless Satel has evidence that salt intake is associated with self-reported experiences of racial discrimination, there would be no basis for adjusting results for salt consumption.

Satel's disregard for scientific evidence, methodology, and reasoning is further revealed by her curious assertion that the federal government should "cease funding research into the effects of 'powerlessness,' 'classism,' and 'racism' on health; these are virtually impossible to study in quantitative fashion." Does she offer any evidence to back up her claim? No. Does she acknowledge the existence of substantive methodological review articles critically evaluating available measures for use in quantitative research on these topics? No. Does she contradict herself by stating, "It is not unreasonable to think that the stress of being a victim of discrimination could produce certain kinds of illnesses ... For example, the immune and hormonal systems and cardiovascular functioning can be affected by emotional states," and then asserting that no funds should be granted to explore such hypotheses? Yes. Satel's article is a textbook example of ideological doctrine crudely and erroneously applied to medicine and public health.

Nancy Krieger
Harvard School of Public Health
Boston, Mass.

The critics of medical inequality never say that every time a black woman gets sick, it's the fault of racist living or

working conditions. And I'm sure that some women, Jews, and blacks have neglected their health. The difference is that my rich white friends who drink, drug, and crème brûlée themselves into clogged arteries have insurance plans that cover surgery—even those who did not exercise the "responsibility for preserving his or her own health" that Satel champions. That poor people lack jobs with insurance coverage is a result of inequality, not personal irresponsibility.

Satel insists that black patients don't need black doctors, and that getting more blacks into medical schools is unnecessary for this reason. But if I were black, I'm sure I would want to see a doctor I knew wasn't racist. As a woman, I'm glad I can see a female gynecologist. In the 1970s only about five percent of U.S. gynecologists were female. Today more than 30 percent are. The women's-health movement emerged precisely because women were tired of male physicians who treated their bodies as objects over which they, not the women, had expertise and authority. The women's-health movement fought for informed-consent laws to combat forced sterilization (which through the 1970s some physicians performed on women deemed unfit for parenthood). And, thanks to both social activists and the increasing number of female physicians, women who end up in hospital emergency rooms after being beaten by their male partners—a physical problem directly related to the social problem of gender inequality—are more likely to be assisted, by female and male practitioners, in a way that does not blame the victims but instead gets them the help and shelter they need.

Martha McCaughey
Associate Professor of Women's Studies
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Blacksburg, Va.

Sally Satel replies:

Nancy Krieger says that attempting to measure salt intake would have been irrelevant to her evaluation of race and blood pressure. But because some of her analyses compared whites with blacks on the blood-pressure variable, it would make sense to correct for salt intake as one of many factors that might influence race-related differences. After all, in her original paper in the *American Journal*

of Public Health (October, 1996) she reported taking alcohol consumption, smoking, body-mass index, and use of hypertension medications into account as "potential confounders." Such potential confounders were taken into account because, like salt, they could influence blood-pressure levels.

Even so, the salt issue was the least of my criticisms. Far more important was Krieger's invocation of "internalized oppression" as a possible explanation for the unexpected direction of some data (such as that black working-class men and women who reported no experiences of discrimination had higher blood-pressure readings than those reporting one or more). The problem with assuming that some subjects internalized oppression, and thus felt they deserved to be treated unfairly, is that it is not amenable to falsification and thus is not legitimate as a scientific hypothesis. It is simply a ready way to explain away data that do not fit Krieger's starting prediction that blood pressure and reports of discrimination would track.

I have no objection to careful research examining the relationship of race or stress (perceived or physiologically measured) to health outcomes. I am very doubtful, though, that doctrines such as racism and classism can be operationalized and thus studied in a rigorous fashion.

Finally, in the realm of clinical practice, it is encouraging to discover that patients are far less race-conscious than my critics. In the aggregate patients don't seem much concerned about the race of the person treating them: most want a competent physician of any race who can spend some time with them. A 1994 Commonwealth Survey of more than 2,700 patients found that "nationality/race/ethnicity" tied for twelfth out of thirteen possible factors that white, black, Hispanic, or Asian patients look for in a doctor.

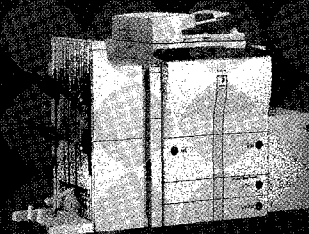
Some African-Americans do indeed prefer a black doctor; I found some surveys (from the Kaiser Family Foundation and others) that put this number at 20 to 25 percent, proportionate to the percentage of all doctors who are black. In other words, one fourth of black patients (or about three percent of the general population) prefer black doctors, and three percent of all U.S. doctors are black. Of note, 12 to 17 percent of minority members interviewed in one large survey explicitly stated that they did not prefer a doctor of their own race.

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New Mexico's Hidden Jews

The tone of "Mistaken Identity? The Case of New Mexico's 'Hidden Jews,'" by Barbara Ferry and Debbie Nathan (December *Atlantic*), troubles me. This essay clearly demonstrates the authors' sketchy understanding of New Mexico Indo-Hispano culture and of the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism. They have written about people who, for their own serious reasons, have reclaimed their Judaic roots. The authors ridicule Hispanos who claim a Sephardic legacy or who have accepted Judaism because of it. They insidiously discredit serious scholarly work by Texas Mexicans and New Mexican Indo-Hispanos who seek to understand the Sephardic Jewish legacy prevalent throughout the Southwest and its impact on religious and cultural identity.

In view of the tone of the essay, the reference to Richard Santos as an "amateur historian" is neither an accurate nor an objective description of a man who earns his livelihood as a research historian and writer. It is a putdown of a serious researcher with extensive information in his personal archives and a comprehensive and profound knowledge about crypto-Judaism in the historical Nuevo Reino de Leon. Ferry and Nathan present one valid scholar of crypto-Judaism—a graduate student working on a doctoral dissertation in folklore at the University of Indiana. The scholar's conclusion that residual Jewish practices and iconic remnants in New Mexico derive from the Church of God (Seventh Day) illustrate her simplistic understanding of New Mexico's complex religious and cultural history.

I also wish to correct an erroneous statement about my work. I have never speculated that early Hispano Presbyterian congregations were "secret synagogues for crypto-Jews who wanted to read the Bible." When I researched a statement made by a self-proclaimed heir of crypto-Judaism that a specific Presbyterian congregation in northern New Mexico was made up of crypto-Jews, I found it to be false and documented my findings in a working paper in 1991. I have done scholarly work on the possibility that early Hispano Protes-

tant conversions are linked to the crypto-Jewish legacy. I have suggested that the crypto-Jewish sacred obligation to read the Bible daily, generally unavailable to the Catholic layperson, could have been a factor in conversions. Instead of citing my work and my findings, the authors analyze my motives for conducting research on early Hispano Protestant conversions, saying that I sought links to a Sephardic Jewish legacy "to reconcile [my] modern, Chicano identity with what [I think] of as [my] traditional, shamefully Anglo persona."

Tomas Atencio
Albuquerque, N. Mex.

The article by Barbara Ferry and Debbie Nathan is a gold mine of nonobjectivity.

1. The authors present some people in a demeaning manner and point out irrelevant characteristics. For example, they ignore the professional reasons why a well-respected educator and poet from northern New Mexico would be invited to address groups, and present her thus: "She began appearing at conferences where she would read poems she had written, in a high, didactic voice." They call attention to the "vaguely olive cast" of her skin and describe her eyelids as "slightly hooded." They present a distinguished, highly qualified historian, well known and respected for his research and careful evaluation, as an opportunistic academician. A folklorist is described as "middle-aged" and unhappy at not finding a university to teach at.

2. The writers demean the Hispano people and villages of northern New Mexico and their centuries-old culture, calling them "peasant." They further show ignorance of the legitimacy of the traditional art form of the santero and the hand-carved statues of saints called *bul-tos*, which the authors refer to as tourist kitsch. The work of these artists, in metal, wood, straw, and paint, are highly prized by folk-art museums and collectors.

3. Hispanos of northern New Mexico are called racist for allegedly denying Indian blood. In all my years of working throughout the state, I have heard only pride from the descendants of Spanish settlers for their Indian ancestors. The authors seemingly don't know

about, or ignore, the alliance between the settlers and Pueblo Indians to resist Apache or Comanche raiders.

4. I was present at the El Paso conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, which the authors attended. They refer to the society in their article. They requested interviews from three of the presenters, including the educator-poet and the historian referred to above. But they didn't interview Rabbi Joshua Stampfer and Dr. Seth Kunin, both of whom were present and accessible. Rabbi Stampfer, a founder of the society, is known for his role in assisting the crypto-Jews of Belmonte, Portugal, in their efforts to get rabbinical supervision for their return to Judaism. Dr. Kunin, an anthropologist at Leeds University, has interviewed crypto-Jews about their families and customs. Were they not interviewed or reported on because what they have to say would counter the hypothesis of "mistaken identity" held by the authors of the article?

*Dolores J. Sloan
Santa Fe, N. Mex.*

**Barbara Ferry and
Debbie Nathan reply:**

We meant no disrespect to Richard Santos; we called him an amateur historian because he does not have an advanced degree in history.

On the issue of crypto-Jews and the Hispano Presbyterian Church, the nature of the disagreement is somewhat elusive. We didn't mean to suggest that in Atencio's view, the Hispano Presbyterian Church functioned literally as a synagogue. But Atencio has indeed raised the possibility, as he does again in his letter, that the Hispano Presbyterian Church might have possessed characteristics that would have proved attractive to persons with a crypto-Jewish background, and that crypto-Jews may have been present in some congregations in significant numbers.

Dolores Sloan decries a lack of objectivity, and she will probably find any protestations unpersuasive. It should at least be noted that Sloan is a co-editor of SCJS's newsletter and a conference planner for the group.

We did in fact interview Seth Kunin, but found his work to be not germane, because he studies how people construct their identities as crypto-Jews, rather than whether there is any historical or factual basis for the construction.

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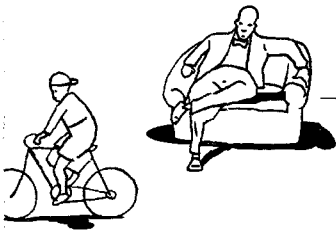
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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

THY WILL BE DONE

*Blind studies
and answered prayers*

.....

“Okay. Now sit up. That’s great. And close your eyes and relax all your muscles, starting with your feet, your calves, your thighs. Loosen up your belt. Shrug your shoulders around. Roll your head and neck around—just loosen up.”

Herbert Benson, M.D., the president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School, spoke in a voice of implacable serenity, and I did what I was told. Benson is the author of *The Relaxation Response*, which has sold some four million copies since it was published, in 1975, and he was demonstrating some of the techniques he uses to help people achieve a more beneficial state of mind. People pay considerable sums to attend seminars at which Benson introduces those techniques, and from my own experience I must admit that there is much to recommend them.

However, I had come to Benson’s consulting room to learn not about relaxation but about his most recent research project, which has to do with prayer and healing. Specifically, it involves what is known as “intercessory prayer”: prayer offered by one person for another’s welfare—in this case, another person’s recovery from illness. Benson has mounted a controversial scientific effort to determine what may be indeterminable: whether intercessory prayer “works.”

Benson came to this question gradually. His medical training was in cardiology, which led him to an interest in hypertension, and ultimately to the idea that a reduction in mental stress could have positive physical consequences: the “relaxation response.” The notion that there is a connection, however hard to

define, between state of mind and state of body is by now so widely accepted that it’s hard to remember how much resistance ideas like Benson’s initially met. Meditation and similar techniques were one way of producing a state of mental well-being, Benson maintained, and he came to believe that meditation’s close kin, repetitive personal prayer, might be another. His own religious background is Judaism, and though he is not observant, he is a believer in God. He has speculated in his writings that human



beings are “wired for God”: for evolutionary purposes, believing in God and an afterlife might have conferred a survival advantage. In 1995 Benson established the first course on spirituality and healing at Harvard Medical School (though interest in the subject there goes back at least to William James). Around the same time he began to think about taking his research on prayer into another dimension.

By now a significant body of research backs up the notion that personal prayer can be a healthful activity, if only because of the placebo effect. Remote intercessory prayer, in behalf of patients who don’t know they are being prayed for, is quite another matter. Here the

benefits from what may merely be psychic self-delusion are missing, and prayer has to speak for itself.

Herbert Benson is not alone in his inquiries—studies of intercessory prayer have been under way at Duke University and at Temple University. Such investigations have a long history. In the nineteenth century Sir Francis Galton tried by various means to evaluate the efficacy of intercessory prayer. For instance, he looked at the lifespan

of members of royal houses, assuming that royalty would be the most prayed-for people in any kingdom, but found, as he reported in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1872, that royal personages were “literally the shortest-lived of all who have the advantage of affluence,” even when deaths by accident or violence were excluded. Galton also examined maritime records to determine whether there was any difference in the rate of misadventure at sea between vessels carrying missionaries to distant lands and vessels plying the same routes but engaged in trade, including the slave trade. Insurance companies, he discovered, “absolutely ignore the slightest difference between them.”

The use of double-blind clinical trials to investigate intercessory prayer was pioneered in a 1965 study conducted by C.R.B. Joyce and R.M.C. Welldon at the London Hospital Medical College. They assigned patients afflicted with “stationary or progressively deteriorating psychological or rheumatic disease” to two groups: one was prayed for by volunteers, often in teams, and the other was not. The patients were not told they were participating in a clinical trial, and the examining physicians did not know to which group the patients were as-

SEAN KELLY



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signed. After many months the researchers assessed the conditions of the "treated" and "control" patients and discerned no clear pattern.

In 1988 Randolph C. Byrd, of the San Francisco General Medical Center, reported on a study he had conducted of 393 patients in a coronary-care unit, roughly half of whom unknowingly "received IP" from born-again Christians who prayed for them by first name outside the hospital. Byrd determined that the control patients "required ventilatory assistance, antibiotics, and diuretics more frequently than patients in the IP group," and concluded that "intercessory prayer to the Judeo-Christian God has a beneficial therapeutic effect."

In 1999 the cardiologist William S. Harris and several colleagues published a study similar to Byrd's in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. The Harris study involved 990 patients admitted to the coronary-care unit at the Mid America Heart Institute, in Kansas City, Missouri. Once again patients were randomly assigned without their knowledge to a treatment or a control group, with the treatment group being prayed for by a team of outside intercessors. The study found that the treatment group registered better outcomes on a specially devised coronary-health scale. "This result," Harris and his colleagues concluded, "suggests that prayer may be an effective adjunct to standard medical care." The authors skirted the question of the precise causal mechanism, noting that "when James Lind, by clinical trial, determined that lemons and limes cured scurvy aboard the HMS *Salisbury* in 1753, he not only did not know about ascorbic acid, he did not even understand the concept of a 'nutrient.'"

Not surprisingly, the small world of investigators attempting to document the power of intercessory prayer has given rise to a parallel and contrary world of investigators attempting to show that such claims are nonsense. Many of these researchers are grouped around the Council for Secular Humanism and the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the

Paranormal, both based in Amherst, New York, and around the magazines *Free Inquiry* and *Skeptical Inquirer*.

The anti-IP argument has several parts. One of them takes issue with how studies have been conducted. For instance, the "blindedness" of the Byrd study was not as complete as it should have been, and the definition of what constitutes a "good" outcome in the Harris study was far too fluid. Also, how does one interpret the fact that many people in the IP groups didn't show any improvement at all? (Thirteen of those in the Byrd study died.) How does one even begin to get a handle on IP's dose-response effect, which would be crucial if IP were a drug? Is it possible to receive an overdose?

A broader line of attack questions whether a scientific evaluation of the efficacy of prayer is even theoretically feasible. How does one know that the people who are supposed to be doing the praying are really doing it? Must one not also consider the impact of malicious supplication? The scientific distinction between prayed-for groups and not-prayed-for groups is probably impossible to maintain: people who don't receive formal IP treatment may be getting it in other ways—from relatives, for instance, or as spillover from general prayers by the devout for the sick. This is a problem that skeptics refer to as "background prayer."

And then there are the many questions posed by theology. "If you are specifically assigning any efficacy to the Judeo-Christian God or the biblical God, you are in big trouble," says Hector Avalos, a professor of religion at Iowa State University. Avalos was a Pentecostal faith healer as a child and is now an atheist and a prominent skeptic. "There are circumstances in which the biblical God will not answer prayer. How does a scientific study ever establish that subjects are meeting God's conditions? There are passages in the Bible, for example, which say that if a whole nation is not doing well, he's not going to answer its people's prayers. There's a verse in Jeremiah which says don't even bother to pray for evil people. It's beyond me how scientists will ever establish what God's mood is any particular day."

This is the context in which Herbert Benson and his colleagues have organized their study of intercessory prayer. Benson won't discuss details of the research design, except to say that he believes he has avoided the flaws of previous studies and has addressed the issue of background prayer. The data were gathered in widely separated hospitals from more than a thousand patients divided into three groups. One group knew it was being prayed for. The other two groups didn't know they were in a study; one of them was prayed for and the other wasn't. The research has been supported by a large grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

Benson is careful to emphasize that he's investigating the matter dispassionately—just looking for correlations. Although his data have been collected, he and his team remain blinded and do not yet know the results. A full study will be published early in 2002. The research effort has already caused "some slight discomfort," as doctors say, in both the scientific and religious realms. Among scientists, reaction to undertakings like Benson's falls heavily toward the contemptuous end of the shrug-to-sneer spectrum. (The National Institutes of Health, however, is accepting grant proposals for research on "therapeutic prayer," broadly defined.) Among people in religion there are of course many who have no doubt that a personal God answers individual prayers and many who detect only vanity in that notion; but both sorts of people may deem it prideful, or foolish, to put God to the test. Some, like those in charge of the Templeton Foundation, believe that science and religion can be—should be—reconciled. But far more people in both science and religion have accepted that their two worlds were rent asunder centuries ago, and see every reason to preserve the breach.

Such will be the contours of the discussion when Benson reveals his results, and that discussion will probably be a heated one. I'm no doctor, but my advice to interested spectators comes from Benson's earlier research: Shrug your shoulders around. Roll your head and neck around—just loosen up. ■

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NOTES & DISPATCHES

BANGOR, MAINE

UNCIVIL AVIATION

How a small city's airport became the capital of air rage

.....

High over the Atlantic Ocean one afternoon last October, an elderly woman in seat 26B on American Airlines Flight 67 from London to Chicago put her seatback in full recline. This caused grievous vexation to the passenger in 27B, a tall fifty-three-year-old Danish businessman named Jorgen Kragh. According to witnesses later interviewed by the FBI, Kragh launched an escalating campaign of harassment against the offending passenger and her husband. He repeatedly smacked her seatback and then jammed his knees into it, causing her to leap up. He chanted "Kill you, kill you" to the couple. At one point Kragh took out his cell phone and ostensibly made a call to Chicago—his end of the conversation was loud enough that everyone around could hear—in which he described the woman's husband and gave the flight information in detail. "Kill him when the plane arrives in Chicago," he said. "I want him taken out tonight."

Alerted by flight attendants, the pilot deviated from his flight path and quietly touched down at 3:55 P.M., well before the jet was scheduled to arrive in Chicago. The door opened and eight law-enforcement officers and airport officials trotted on board, led by Police Sergeant Ward Gagner, who is six feet three inches tall and weighs 225 pounds. The passengers were eerily silent as the squad walked through the cabin, until Gagner stopped at row 27. Then somebody said, "Uh-oh."

Kragh protested his eviction from the jet, claiming variously that he had diplomatic immunity, that he paid U.S. taxes, and that he was an American Air-

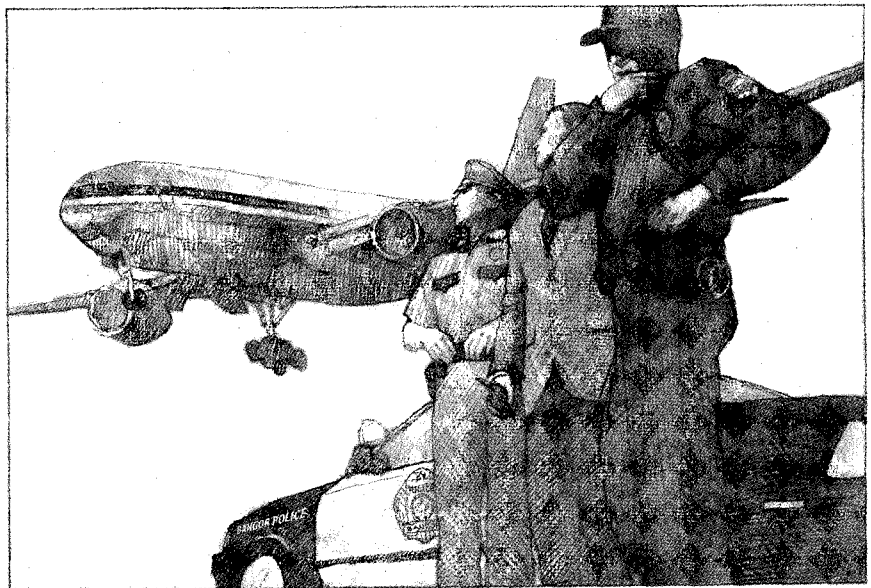
lines platinum-card holder with three million frequent-flyer miles. None of these statements proved persuasive; he was handcuffed and taken off the plane to a waiting cruiser. On the tarmac he repeatedly asked if this were an elaborate joke, and twice inquired if he were on *Candid Camera*.

He wasn't, Gagner told him. He was in Bangor, Maine.

Bangor, a city of 33,000, has recently emerged as a sort of pit-stop gulag for disruptive overseas passengers. "They have a nice little cottage industry going there," Alison Duquette, a spokesperson for the Federal Aviation Administration, told me earlier this year. During one five-week period last summer three flights with unruly pas-

Sing Sing of the skies, at least not initially. The role was thrust upon it in large part by geography. Depending on which way a transatlantic plane is headed, Bangor can be the first or the last major airport in the United States. The city has capitalized on this fact before. As home to an Air Force base until 1968 and, subsequently, as a commercial-flight stopover, Bangor did a booming business servicing short-range planes, which needed to refuel before crossing the Atlantic. In the early 1990s the city optimistically built a modern international terminal, with four gates, seating for about 450, and a snack bar equipped to accept British and Finnish currency.

Unfortunately for Bangor, though, the charter companies that were providing the bulk of the airport's interna-



sengers were diverted to this quiet regional airport. According to Jeff Russell, the airport's marketing manager, eight to twelve flights each year drop into Bangor to unload problem passengers. The airport earns \$750 to \$3,000 per landing, depending on services required, plus fuel revenues.

The city didn't set out to become the

tional business prospered, and soon they traded up to newer, long-range jets capable of flying to their final destinations without refueling. Other than a trickle of charters that still use older jets, the occasional diversion for a medical emergency, and a dozen or so flights each week that hit unexpectedly strong headwinds and decide to top off

their tanks, there is little international air traffic in Bangor these days. Most of the time the new terminal is empty.

On clear days Russell can look out the window of his office at the airport and see contrails etch their way across the blue sky. During the summer peak some 400 to 700 flights a day pass over or near Maine, and the great majority keep right on going, as scheduled. But several years ago some of those that didn't caught Russell's attention.

Russell began to notice that Bangor occupied a sort of geographic flash point for passengers on the verge of a meltdown. "Trouble seems to develop within two hundred and fifty nautical miles of Bangor, on the outbound as well as on the inbound," he told me during a recent visit to the airport. "My theory on this is, hey, you've eaten your food, watched the movie, had a nap. Now it's time to act up."

Although air rage has gotten a lot of press lately, it's hardly a recent phenomenon. Obnoxious passengers have always disrupted flights. In 1969, for example, Jim Morrison, of The Doors, along with a friend ("two hippie-appearing individuals," the FBI reported), was ejected from a flight after smoking cigars, drinking immoderately, and loudly comparing the emergency oxygen masks to contraceptive devices.

What has changed, and dramatically, is the airlines' response to such behavior. In the past unwanted passengers were more often than not escorted off at the nearest airport and left to fend for themselves. Being abandoned in a strange city was considered punishment enough. Faced with an increase in both the number and the scariness of incidents, however, the government and the airlines began prosecuting offenders vigorously and imposing serious fines and jail time. Last April, Congress raised the maximum civil fine from \$1,100 to \$25,000 per violation (a single air-rage incident may involve several violations).

Sensing an opportunity, Bangor International Airport expanded its menu of services for overseas flights to include the quick processing of problem passengers. "If you're in the business of getting people to stop at your airport for fuel or

whatever, you take situations like this and you run with them," Russell said.

Bangor ran with its situation by assembling a team that could handle air-rage situations with efficiency and dispatch, and then discreetly spreading the word about its service. Successful prosecution of an unruly passenger requires that federal agents be on hand to take statements from witnesses, which can consume a significant amount of time at a busy airport (as can finding an open gate to begin with, and later queuing to take off). "The captain wants to stay in control," Ward Gagner says. "They want to get in and get out. They could land at JFK, but then they'd be just a number."

Once a pilot with a disruptive passenger radios ahead to Bangor, the airport activates its team, which can be ready with twenty minutes' notice. The team typically includes members of the Bangor police department, customs officers, and FBI agents, who are based at a federal office building only ten minutes by car from the airport. When the jet lands, it is usually directed to an isolated corner of the tarmac. Ramps are rolled up to the plane, the door is opened, and the team spills into the cabin. "We never like to go aboard with just one person," says Gagner, who is stationed at the airport and handles many of the incidents. "We like to overwhelm with a show of force—the doors open up and there are a bunch of uniforms. The passengers are relieved."

When I first heard of the team, I imagined a taciturn posse of Russell Crowe types in black watch caps carrying rucksacks filled with grapples, their heads crammed with details about the precise layout of every Boeing in case they needed to remove panels and enter covertly through the lavatory. But as it turns out, the team consists of various regular officers and agents; it doesn't even stage practice air-rage drills. Gagner likens the handling of an air-rage episode (somewhat disappointingly) to "removing a drunk patron from a bar." He says, "Usually we go on board and the flight attendants are backed off and they just point in the general direction. There's usually a guy on the floor with three or four napkins tied around his wrists, or with a passenger sitting on him."

As with many action-packed endeavors, the real superstars are those who handle paperwork most expeditiously, and here Bangor shines. Before a flight even touches down, updated flight plans and weather briefings are in the works. "Our turnaround time is often under an hour," Russell told me. "You'll spend more time taxiing at a major airport than you will having an air-rage incident dealt with here."

American Airlines Flight 67 was a case in point. The flight landed, Jorgen Kragh was taken to the county lockup, the FBI took statements from passengers who had been sitting near Kragh, and the plane refueled and was back in the air, headed for Chicago, at 5:20 P.M.—only eighty-five minutes after it had touched down. (The next day, at the federal courthouse in Bangor, Kragh pleaded no contest to a charge of simple assault and was sentenced to twenty-one days in prison and a \$5,000 fine.)

The FAA says that the number of reported air-rage incidents dipped from 310 in 1999 to 266 in 2000, although it acknowledges that many incidents go unreported. Russell agrees that the problem is worse than the numbers suggest, and he suspects that we're not yet over the hump. "I think it's going to get worse before it gets better," he told me. And Bangor, he is confident, will be ready when it does. —WAYNE CURTIS

THE AMUR RIVER, RUSSIA

"STREET OF RUSSIAN GOODS WELCOME!"

In a remote and still-sensitive border region Russians and Chinese are enjoying an economic rapprochement

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The Amur River, a 1,755-mile-long waterway separating Russia and China in the Far East, contains two of the few remaining parcels of disputed territory along the Russian-Chinese border—until recently one of the tensest, most highly militarized frontiers in the world. In 1997 Moscow and Beijing signed a treaty demarcating the boundary, which in many places had been ill

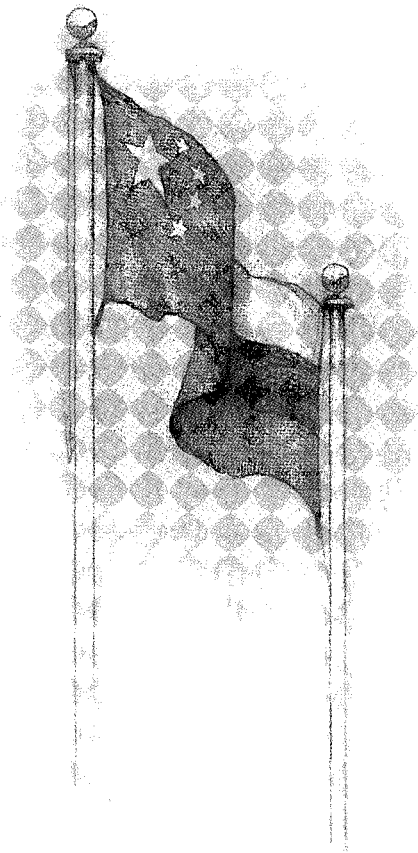
defined. They could not, however, resolve a quarrel over two Russian-held islands in the river. Subsequent talks have produced no progress.

Moscow's insistence on retaining the islands derives from a feeling of vulnerability vis-à-vis China. Since the start of Deng Xiaoping's market reforms, in 1978, China's economy has quadrupled; following the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, Russia's has shrunk by half. More than 80 million people live in the Chinese provinces that border the Amur, and Beijing is encouraging further settlement; on the Russian side the population is five million and falling. As the Russian government has grown ever more disorganized and strapped for funds, it has become less and less able to support the regions along the river financially.

Russian officials often express fear that China is taking advantage of the disorder and carrying out a campaign of "creeping expansionism" in the resource-rich lands northeast of the Amur. But when I visited the area early last fall, I saw no signs of expansionism, creeping or otherwise. Instead I found a surprising amount of cross-border trade, of obvious benefit to both parties. Among other things, this trade is providing Russians with goods they could not otherwise obtain and income that partly compensates for Moscow's salary and pension arrears—economic benefits that are helping to palliate centuries-old Russian suspicion of and animosity toward the Chinese.

Some 203,000 people live in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, a patch of swamp, forest, and low mountains bordering the Amur. In 1934 the Soviet government formally declared the territory a "homeland" for the country's Jewish population, not because this particular patch of land had any connection to things Jewish but because it was rich in minerals and practically uninhabited—factors that could have made it a target for annexation by Japan, whose forces were then occupying China. And given the history of anti-Semitism in Russia, authorities no doubt viewed the territory as attractively remote from the heartland.

Several hundred Chinese legally reside in the oblast. Most work in farming, as field hands and advisers. Because of its short growing season, the Russian Far East has always suffered deficiencies in agriculture. Recent emigration from destitute state and collective farms and a lack of laws that would assure private farmers rights over their land have made matters worse, even as rising transportation costs have made the importation of food prohibitive. So the oblast has looked across the river for help.



One of the main employers of Chinese labor here is a 500-acre farm just north of the capital, Birobidzhan. The manager, a robust retired army officer in a camouflage jacket, showed me around. He explained that the farm employs nearly sixty Chinese as pickers and as experts in animal husbandry and the cultivation of crops with which Russian farmers have had little experience, such as watermelons and rice. They are not paid wages; instead the owner divides among them half of the farm's profits—an arrangement that requires no small amount of trust.

In the fields Chinese laborers stooped to pick tomatoes, filling their buckets and dumping them into a trailer nearby. This was backbreaking, monotonous work, but they were laughing, even singing. When I asked about their lives on the farm, their replies were uniformly cheerful: "The air is fresh." "There are few people here." "The Russians are honest with us." My translator, a young Chinese woman, echoed these sentiments. "We all feel this way," she told me. "In China there is no work, and it's very polluted, and there are too many people."

An unlikely cross-border symbiosis exists in the realm of consumer goods, too. In Khabarovsk, a placid Russian city of 600,000 on the riverbank downstream, I took a battered gray Volga taxi out to the edge of town. On a dusty, sun-drenched eminence, surrounded by a fence of aluminum siding and rusted barbed wire, stood Vyborg Market—the locus for Chinese traders, who are discouraged by city authorities from selling downtown.

I paid the one-ruble admission fee and entered a maze of gimcrack stalls made from pipes and blue-and-yellow plastic tarps. Near the gates sat Azerbaijani and other traders from the Caucasus. Farther in, Chinese salesmen slouched on stools, rolling up their T-shirts to cool their midriffs and massaging their bare feet.

A Chinese teenager exclaimed in broken Russian, "Adidas cheap! Nike cheap!" His "Adidas" track suits, sprouting errant threads, their labels sewn on crooked, went for the equivalent of fourteen dollars. "Nike" track suits went for eleven. The wares at other tables, from Van Damme videos to DiCaprio T-shirts to calculators, were clearly modeled on Western goods but were of a far lesser quality. Still, it was easy to see how they found a market: they were much cheaper than genuine Western items would be. At one stand I stopped to examine "designer Italian" sunglasses and struck up a conversation with the merchant and his wife. Sasha and Lena (the Chinese working in Russia often use Russian names) were from Harbin, 400 miles to the south. They found it impossible to

make ends meet in China, so they had taken to "suitcase trading"—hauling bags filled with wares by bus and ferry from Harbin to Khabarovsk. Selling these shoddy goods enabled them to pay their bills, but just barely. Contrary to the Russian officials' fears of expansionism, merchants like Sasha and Lena—corralled in this wire-and-siding pen, firmly under the control of the authorities—pose no possible threat to the region.

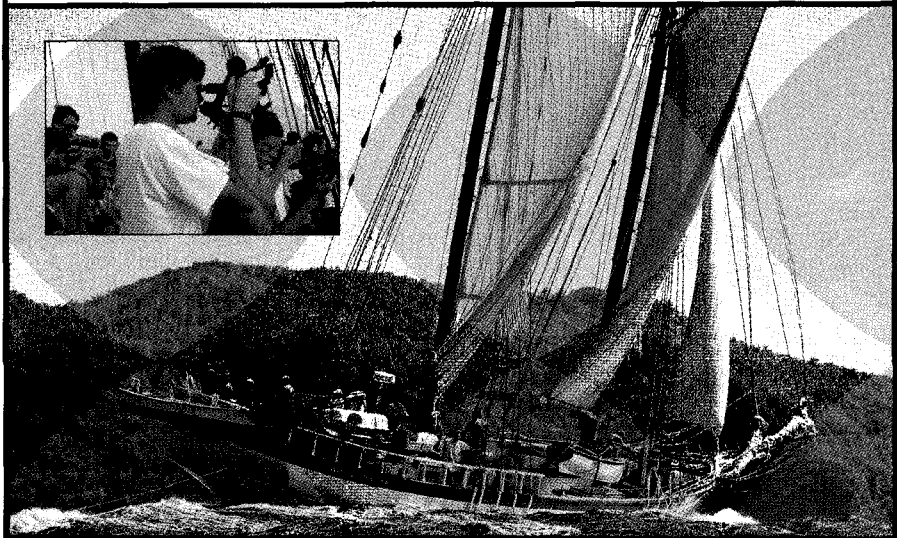
Cross-border trade is more central to the economy in the Amur Oblast city of Blagoveshchensk, 400 miles to the northwest. Here Chinese goods are not relegated to remote flea markets; they fill the downtown stores. In 1994, in order to promote trade, the governments of the Amur Oblast and Heihe, the Chinese port across the river, established a policy of visa-free entry for citizens of each other's countries.

One of the main venues for Chinese goods in Blagoveshchensk is Kitayskaya Yarmarka ("the Chinese Fair"), a department store just outside the city center. The store is a head-spinning conglomeration of neon, plastic, polyester, glass, and crystal. The walls are draped with coats, dresses, shirts, and slacks; virtually every inch of floor space is stacked high with shoes, toys, and appliances; the ceilings are hung with lamps and chandeliers for sale. As in Khabarovsk, the selection reflects a ransacking of Western culture for themes and designs. For the most part, though, the quality is good.

But when I stopped in, the crowd was buying little and the merchants looked bored. Xin Guo Kun, one of the first Chinese merchants to set up business there, showed me a leather coat. She said that before the latest Russian economic crisis hit, in 1998, she could clear a profit of a hundred rubles on such a coat. Now she's lucky if she makes twenty. Everywhere the story was the same. Still, those who had managed to survive had no plans to close up shop and return home, given the surplus of goods and people in their own country.

The coat Xin showed me was manufactured in Shanghai from Russian leather—a combination that points to a

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general inequity in Russia's trade with China. Russians sell raw materials to Chinese entrepreneurs and state enterprises at low prices; the Chinese resell them to their country's resource-strapped manufacturers, using the profits to buy Chinese consumer goods for export to Russia. Such trade doubly benefits China, which acquires both raw materials and a market for its goods. Russia gains access to cheap goods but forgoes production-tax revenues and manufacturing jobs. Thus it is Heihe, on the Chinese side of the river, that profits most. "Heihe was just a dirty village when I first came here, in the 1980s," Victor Gaidin, the Amur Oblast's chief trade representative, told me. "Now it's a city of seventy or eighty thousand."

Gaidin, a Sinophile and a fluent speaker of Mandarin, accompanied me on an excursion to Heihe. From across the river the city looks impressively

modern. Its skyline is studded with dock cranes and towers with windows tinted in hip shades of azure, red, and yellow. Close up, however, it has an aura of prefab shoddiness and impermanence, as if it might be blown down by a strong wind. The sidewalks are cracking, and many of the plastic Chinese characters affixed to exterior shop walls are peeling off.

Near the waterfront hung a sign in ungrammatical Russian: STREET OF RUSSIAN GOODS WELCOME! At one table I saw what I took to be used Russian military binoculars. High-powered, compact, and almost indestructible, these have been among the most popular Russian items on sale in Heihe. I picked up a pair. They were feather-light, made of flimsy plastic. When I peered through them, they seemed to diminish the objects in their view. They were counterfeit, of course—but they were selling. —JEFFREY TAYLER

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

A BRAND-NEW OLNSTED

The discovery and replanting of a century-old lost landscape

.....

Judging from its late-nineteenth-century downtown buildings, Scranton was once a rich little city. The coal barons who made their fortunes mining anthracite—hard, clean coal—poured their wealth into bricks and mortar. Rugged Richardsonian Romanesque office blocks line the sidewalks. Elaborate churches (one designed by the New York architect Russell Sturgis) punctuate the street corners, their steeples competing with the tower of the Victorian Gothic city hall. Opposite the handsome Beaux Arts high school is a real gem—the public library, a passable replica of a fifteenth-century French chateau in Indiana limestone.

It was the library I had come to see—or, more precisely, the library's garden—on a visit a year ago. The landscape architect responsible for its design was Frederick Law Olmsted, the famous builder of Central Park, whose biography I had recently finished writing. But when Jack Finnerty, the direc-

tor of the library, called me about the garden, I had to admit that I'd never heard of it. That wasn't really surprising: although the garden was designed in 1892–1893, this Olmsted landscape was completely new to modern eyes.

The Scranton Public Library, also known as the Albright Memorial Building, was built thanks to the generosity of John Joseph Albright, a Buffalo financier who had grown up in Scranton and made a vast fortune in the coal-shipping business. In 1890 he and his three siblings donated the land, which was the site of the family homestead, and Albright pledged to pay for the construction of the new building. He knew exactly what he wanted, specifying that the building should be designed by his Buffalo architect, Edward B. Green, and that the grounds should be landscaped by the Brookline, Massachusetts, firm of Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot.

Frederick Law Olmsted, who had earlier designed the park system in Buffalo, had recently laid out the grounds of the Albright estate there. Almost seventy years old, he headed the foremost landscape-architecture practice in the United States, perhaps in the world. Although he and his partners (his stepson, John, and his protégé, Charles Eliot) were working on major commissions around the country (the imminent World's Columbian Exposition, in Chicago; a suburban subdivision in Atlanta; and Biltmore, the huge Vanderbilt mansion in Asheville, North Carolina), no project was too small to merit their attention. They submitted a planting plan for the new library's tiny half-acre site. The detailed order list for the job included no fewer than thirty-seven species of shrubs, trees, and perennials.

Green based his design for the building on the fifteenth-century Musée de Cluny, in Paris. The library has steep roofs covered with black glazed tiles, decorative dormers, lively ornament, and stained-glass windows. This style, known as French Renaissance, was popularized in the United States in the late 1800s by the great architect Richard Morris Hunt, who was collaborating with Olmsted at Biltmore; Hunt had first used French Renaissance in a celebrated Fifth Avenue mansion for William K. Vanderbilt. The picturesque opulence, crafted details, and solid materials—all of which were costly—attracted affluent Americans to what has been called the Nouveau Riche style. Albright promised Scranton citizens "a suitable building of the value of from \$50,000 to \$75,000"; the final cost of the library reached \$125,000. The building opened in 1893, and the garden was finished two years later.

Like many old industrial centers, Scranton is no longer riding high. Anthracite is not in demand, and the fifty-odd collieries that once stood around the city were quieted long ago. The population, which in 1930 had grown with the booming anthracite and steel industries to almost 145,000, has shrunk to about half that size. But

the architectural legacy of the boom years remains. Like most nineteenth-century civic monuments, the library was built to last. Fortunately, Scranton was too poor to "modernize" its library in the 1960s, so no acoustic-tile ceilings or suspended fluorescent lights mar the beautiful interior. The quartered oak paneling, high barrel-vaulted ceilings, and luxurious marble fireplaces remain miraculously intact.

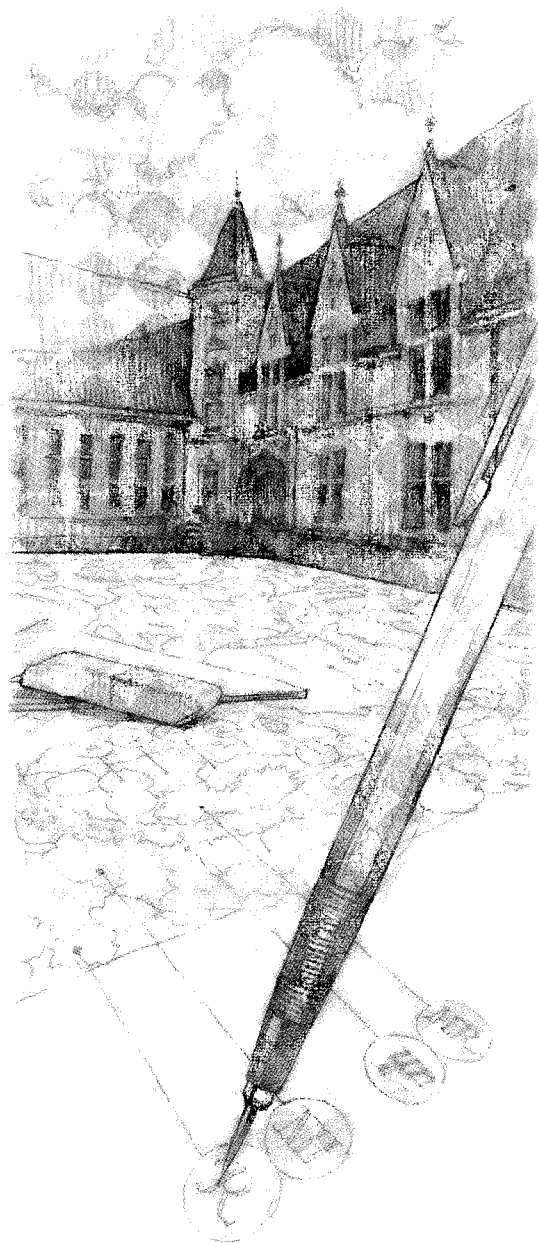
Olmsted's garden fared less well. Landscape is a fragile art form (everyone thinks himself a gardener), and over the years changing tastes made themselves felt. Flower beds were put in and shrubs were removed or crowded out by new oak trees. When a tow-

ering Masonic temple, designed by Raymond Hood in the 1920s, was built next door to the library, the shaded back garden languished. In a final indignity, the plantings on the east side of the building were sacrificed to make way for a parking lot. By 1950 the Olmsted landscape had disappeared.

In 1992, during the planning for the centenary of the library, a local heritage association unexpectedly turned up a copy of the original landscaping plan—a single drawing that specified the names of the plants and included the precise locations of all the plantings. The name Olmsted created a flurry of interest. Since there was barely a trace of the original garden, it was

assumed that the plan had never been implemented; evidence to the contrary turned up only this year. It was decided to rebuild the Olmsted design as part of the anniversary celebration. Except for the back garden, which was too dark to support plant life, Olmsted's plan was carried out again.

I asked Thomas J. McLane, a local landscape architect who was in charge of the work, how he would characterize the hundred-year-old design. "It's not too different from good landscape architecture today," he answered. "It's naturalistic. The pastoral landscape that Olmsted is famous for is simply compressed into a small space." McLane worked with the landscaping drawing and a later planting list, which was located in the Olmsted drawing archive in Brookline. The first challenge was to identify the species in the planting list. The terminology was not always clear. For example, the "World's Fair rhododendrons" were obviously things the Olmsted firm had used in Chicago, but the precise varieties were a mystery. Some plants,



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including zanthorhiza apifolia, or yellow root, a herbaceous ground cover, were no longer easily available, and substitutes had to be found. Others, such as the multifloral rose and the Japanese honeysuckle, are today considered noxious weeds, because of their tendency to spread and dominate large areas, and could not be used. The final planting included thirty-one species of trees, deciduous bushes, evergreen shrubs, and perennials—six fewer than called for in the original plan.

Another problem was the density of the planting. The actual area to be planted, now only about a quarter of an acre, was to contain 1,798 shrubs, perennials, and trees—a veritable jungle. “We assumed that Olmsted planted things in masses and later had them trimmed into clumps, so that they looked like swatches of color,” McLane told me. This approach required constant cutting back to keep growth under control. But times have changed. “They had real gardeners; we have a kid with headphones and a hedge clipper,” McLane said. The modern solution is to plant much more thinly and to create a mass of texture and color by pruning to a natural shape once or twice a year. As a result, the finished garden included only about a third the specified number of plants.

Like all landscapes, Olmsted’s will take time to grow in. When it does, it will exhibit characteristic Olmsted features: tangled rhododendrons and disheveled mountain laurels mixed with evergreen shrubs, surrounding a curved swath of turf—hardly the Sheep Meadow of Central Park, but a pleasing choreography of greens. The only anomalous touch is a solitary flowering dogwood in the center of the grassy area. It was planted almost two decades ago by the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and “removing it was one battle I didn’t need to wage,” Jack Finnerty told me. In fact, the dogwood is a poignant reminder of the hundred-year gap between the first and second incarnations of this garden. I don’t think that Olmsted, who was touchy about details, would object. —WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI

PADUA

SAVING ART FROM ART LOVERS

*Attempts to preserve
a masterpiece may keep us
from appreciating it*

.....

A sign on the ticket desk at the Eremitani Civic Museum announced that the next admission to the Scrovegni Chapel—a renowned chapel decorated with frescoes painted by Giotto around 1303–1305, depicting scenes from the lives of Jesus and the Virgin Mary—would be at 11:20. Our tickets were clearly marked 11:20, and just in case we were still unclear about this, several guards stopped us on the path leading from the museum to the chapel to check them and to make sure we understood when our date with Giotto was scheduled to begin.

My husband and I had made a detour, en route from Verona to Venice, expressly to see the chapel; we had circled the city for almost an hour before finding the museum and (amazingly) a metered parking space nearby—beneath a

sign declaring that we would be towed if we overstayed our welcome.

Eleven years earlier we had stopped in Padua with our two sons to see the Scrovegni. At that time we had simply bought our tickets and walked in. The chapel was musty and poorly lit. We were entirely alone. For a few moments the beauty of the frescoes seemed overwhelming, nearly incomprehensible; the brilliance of Giotto’s colors, the grace of his composition, and above all the intense emotion conveyed (paradoxically) by the restraint and understatement of his renderings of the biblical scenes took us out of ourselves. Even the children were awed, and fell silent.

Until last spring it was still possible for visitors to have a similar experience. But during the past decade or so a debate has raged in preservation circles and among arts administrators in Padua about the best way to protect the frescoes, which have, it is thought, steadily deteriorated, in part because of dust, the toxic chemistry of urban pollution, and the moisture given off by human bodies and breath. Now we were about to witness the solution: a

three-chambered glass module built onto the side of the chapel, designed to process—two stops on the way in, one on the way out—a maximum of twenty-five visitors at a time.

At 11:20 we reported to the side of the chapel to find a locked glass door beyond which a group of tourists—high school students—sat in uncomfortable chairs in a chamber that resembled a cross between an airport lounge (in fact, the students had the grumpy look of travelers waiting out a long flight delay) and one of those scary vestibules in Italian banks, in which, before being admitted to the bank itself, customers are imprisoned long enough for the armed guards to ascertain that they are not planning



to rob the place. A door on the far side of the holding tank opened; the students roused themselves and trudged out, presumably toward the chapel. Soon afterward we were admitted to the now vacant glass cage, where we were detained, with both doors shut, for almost fifteen minutes, during which (as I later learned) the air was exchanged for different air. I fought a rising panic, not because I am claustrophobic but because I could see that the delays were going to put our car in danger of being towed. In a corner of the module was a computer screen on which one could view scenes from the frescoes. Our fellow tourists—mostly Germans, a few Americans—chatted quietly at first, but with an intensifying anxiety and restiveness as our term in this strange purgatory stretched on. At last we watched the high school students leave the chapel, looking now like the moviegoers one sometimes sees exiting a theater with expressions that make one regret having bought a ticket. After another, brief delay two guards arrived to supervise another round of opening and closing of glass doors and to herd us up a ramp and into the chapel for what we were informed, or warned, would be our fifteen minutes.

I wish I could say that the magnificence of Giotto's frescoes transcended the annoyances, discomforts, and pressures of the circumstances under which we were obliged to see them. In fact I found myself not merely distracted from the splendors of the painting but actually unable to get my mind off the other tourists. The hermetically sealed atmosphere was extremely close; instead of being wafted off on heavenly vapors, I smelled bodies, breath, perfume, tobacco. Surrounded by scenes from the lives of Mary and Jesus, I was filled with an ignoble irritation toward my fellow man; clearly, this masterpiece of religious art was failing to have the desired uplifting spiritual effect. I was almost relieved when we were told that our allotted time was over, ushered down another ramp, and made to wait yet another interval until the last series of doors opened, freeing us

to run and see if our car had been towed away. (It hadn't.)

Among the things that the high-tech methods of crowd control had eradicated was a sense—which one can have, or hope to have, in the presence of great art—of a private and personal communion, and also a sense of discovery, of a voluntary, gradual immersion in the depths of a profoundly moving and beautiful painting. What makes the new system even more disturbing is that it's not entirely clear whether the glass vestibule, the air exchange, and so forth are saving the frescoes or putting them at greater risk. Both views can be found on the Internet. One can read a report by an organization called ArtWatch warning that the new module and earlier roof restorations have created the potential for catastrophe by altering the structure in ways that make it less able to withstand the earthquakes that periodically affect this seismically active region. Moreover, the same report claims, the authorities have failed to address a far more serious problem: water collecting in the chapel's crypt.

Other participants in the online debate take a more sanguine view. One person wrote, "Perhaps we should accept that to have had the chapel for 700 years is very lucky, and any earthquakes that come along now ... Well, Giotto is awesome but so too is Nature."

What a pity it would be if the measures that have effectively ruined the Scrovegni Chapel for the ordinary art lover should prove to have been useless, or worse than useless. Meanwhile, there is talk of erecting a facsimile of the chapel and the frescoes—rather like the faux version of the cave paintings at Lascaux—that tourists could visit in lieu of the real thing. But why would anyone want to? Wouldn't most people prefer just to stay home and contemplate, at their leisure, reproductions of the frescoes in an art book or on a computer screen? Maybe we should at least consider the radical notion that masterpieces—like so much else in this mutable world—have a life-span, and ask ourselves if preserving them is worth making it so unpleasant to experience them. —FRANCINE PROSE

GIBRALTAR

SHAKING UP THE ROCK

A crippled sub is reviving talk about Gibraltar's colonial status

.....

On the morning of May 19 last year the HMS *Tireless*, a British nuclear submarine, limped into the port of Gibraltar, powered by its emergency diesel generators. Having suffered a small crack in the coolant pipe leading from its reactor while on routine maneuvers off the coast of Sicily, the *Tireless* sought refuge at Britain's nearest naval base, which happens to rest at the southwestern tip of Spain, on the tiny limestone peninsula known as the Rock. For the better part of a year politicians and scientists from Great Britain, Spain, Gibraltar, and the European Commission have been sparring over the extent of damage to the submarine and the possible safety risks to people who live in and around Gibraltar. Gibraltarians and Spaniards called for the Royal Navy to transfer the *Tireless* to a base in Britain; Britain argued

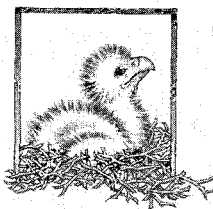
that moving the sub would be too difficult and too risky. Repairs were finally begun, in Gibraltar, in January.

The debate over the *Tireless* has revived another, larger debate—over the political status of Gibraltar. To Britain, Gibraltar is officially an "overseas territory." The United Nations considers it a "non-self-governing territory." The Spanish consider it a colony, and they want it back. Despite years of Gibraltar-related bickering between Britain and Spain, over issues ranging from fishing rights to drug smuggling and money laundering, there have been few high-level talks about Gibraltar's status. The last round occurred in 1999. The controversy over the *Tireless* could well jump-start another.

Spain lost Gibraltar in 1704, when British and Dutch forces captured the peninsula in the War of the Spanish Suc-

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cession. The Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, formalized Gibraltar's status as a British satellite. Spain has tried both diplomacy and guns to get it back. During the so-called Great Siege of 1779–1783 Spanish forces repeatedly attacked Gibraltar, betting, wrongly, that the British would be too preoccupied with the American Revolution to defend against the assaults. General Franco was obsessed with the dream of Gibraltar's return, and for much of his thirty-six-year rule Gibraltarians were uncomfortably aware of Spain's territorial claims on their land. In 1969 Gibraltar drafted a constitution that established limited self-rule and strengthened the territory's ties

ritory has its own flag, its own currency, its own Internet-domain suffix; it even fields its own Miss World contestant.

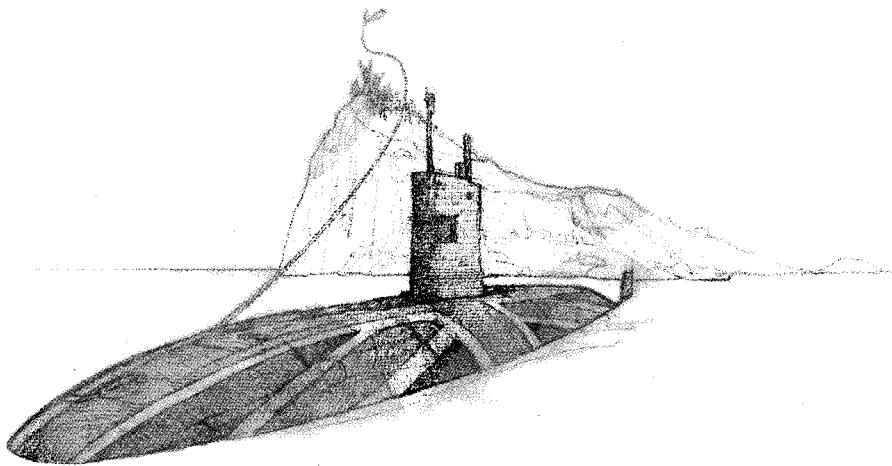
Gibraltar's main draw has always been its location, at the mouth of the Mediterranean. During World War II, Gibraltar was an important British air and naval base, used by the Allies for anti-submarine campaigns and during the invasion of North Africa. Its small airstrip, which sits along the border with Spain, is still pressed into service. The base is currently a stopover for British troops headed for the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone.

A bunker lies buried somewhere deep inside the Rock. In addition, the

tle more than a shopping promenade dotted with British pubs—a far cry from the charming whitewashed villages of nearby Andalucía. Gibraltar does have an active port and, because it is a tax haven, some international banking activity, but the peninsula is largely dependent on tourism. It has no agriculture and no indigenous source of fresh water; it produces and exports practically nothing. As far as Spain is concerned, acquisition or sharing of the territory would be largely symbolic.

Gibraltarians on the whole were satisfied with the status quo—until the arrival of the crippled and possibly dangerous sub. Gibraltar's Chief Minister, Peter Caruana, has made no public statements against having the *Tireless* repaired in Gibraltar and no official demands for its removal; the territory is militarily dependent on Britain and is loath to provoke British anger. The public has been more restive. Mass demonstrations against the submarine's continued presence have drawn thousands of people in Gibraltar, and also in the nearby Spanish town of La Linea. This is the first time in recent memory that a political issue has united citizens on both sides of the border.

Gibraltar's constitution includes provisions protecting the territory from being ceded to another country against the people's "freely and democratically expressed wishes." The only time Gibraltarians voted on the issue, in 1967, the tally was 12,138–44 in favor of remaining part of Britain. However, that was at a time when fears of Franco were at their peak. Anti-Spanish sentiment does not exist to such a degree in Gibraltar today, and Spain is now a prosperous democracy, offering many of the political and economic opportunities that Britain does—but right next door. In 1997 Spain proposed to share sovereignty over Gibraltar with Britain, saying that it would give the peninsula a level of autonomy similar to that of the Basque country. Britain agreed to consider the proposal, but specified that it could be implemented only with Gibraltarian consent. The government of Gibraltar rejected the offer—but such an arrangement might hold more appeal in the wake of the furor over the *Tireless*. —TYLER MARONEY



to Britain, so irritating Franco that he sealed the border and cut off all telephone communications and trade between Gibraltar and Spain. Spanish citizens who lived or worked in Gibraltar had to choose between becoming exiles and moving their homes or jobs to Spain. The border was not completely reopened until 1985.

The 30,000 citizens of Gibraltar are a distinct people with a culture all their own. Their official language is English; they also speak Spanish and, colloquially, a hybrid "Spanglish." Most Gibraltarians are Roman Catholic, but there are at least four synagogues on the peninsula. Gibraltar has a rich history with mythical underpinnings: the ancient Greeks thought it contained the gateway to hell, and Europeans before Columbus considered it to mark the western edge of the world. The ter-

ritory has its own flag, its own currency, its own Internet-domain suffix; it even fields its own Miss World contestant. Gibraltar's main draw has always been its location, at the mouth of the Mediterranean. During World War II, Gibraltar was an important British air and naval base, used by the Allies for anti-submarine campaigns and during the invasion of North Africa. Its small airstrip, which sits along the border with Spain, is still pressed into service. The base is currently a stopover for British troops headed for the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone.

A bunker lies buried somewhere deep inside the Rock. In addition, the British military has dug thirty miles of tunnels, which are used for training infantry in specialized maneuvers. Rumor has it that the British have nuclear weapons stored in this subterranean warren; no one on the outside knows for certain whether this is true.

The British also consider the peninsula important for intelligence reasons. Near the southern tip of Gibraltar sits a massive radar dish, pointing toward Morocco. The dish monitors the Strait of Gibraltar, through which a significant amount of the world's sea traffic passes. Economically, though, Gibraltar is not much of an asset. Although it was considered the northern pillar of Hercules and is still often evoked as a symbol of strength, it is only three miles long and less than a mile wide. Many Gibraltarians live in modern cookie-cutter housing projects built on landfill. The historic downtown has become lit-

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW



FILM

The Eleventh Annual
Ella Awards

DANCE

The POB Dances
La Bayadère

THEATER

Peter Brook's
Tragedy of Hamlet

POPULAR MUSIC

At-Home
Arrangements

JAZZ

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the Jazz Greats

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FILM

by Ella Taylor

THE 2000 ELLA AWARDS

The new movie century began as a blah year for American independent film, a great time for Asian cinema, and a banner year for Steven Soderbergh, who made two out of the three Oscar-worthy studio films of the year. For once, the Academy of Motion Pictures and I are almost in agreement. Almost.

Best Picture: *Traffic*, a stylish, soulful *policier* about the forest of ignorance, confusion, and self-serving that is American drug policy, is a triumph of formal invention for Soderbergh. This egg-headed wunderkind of American independent cinema has distinguished himself as a thinking person's Hollywood showman who crafts brainy, beautiful social-issue dramas that double up as fun nights out at the multiplex. Soderbergh's work recalls a more generous era of American film, when Hollywood and the intellectuals saw no reason to shun one another, or to disdain their audiences. **Runners-Up:** Curtis Hanson's graceful, intelligent *Wonder Boys*, based on the novel by Michael Chabon, returns honor to that debased form, the literary adaptation, as does Terence Davies's haunting, operatic reading of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, and *Before Night Falls*, Julian Schnabel's vibrantly free interpretation of a memoir by Cuban novelist and poet Reinaldo Arenas.

The Fresh Talent Award goes to David Gordon Green for his achingly lovely *George Washington*, about kids surviving, and more, in a run-down North Carolina town. **Runner-Up:** Lynne Ramsay, for the bleak beauty of *Ratcatcher*, about kids surviving, and more, in a Glasgow slum.

Best Foreign-Language Picture: Raul Ruiz's masterpiece, *Time Regained*, has the audacity to give visual form to the inner life of a genius. Passing from room to room of the posh, vicious salons of belle époque Paris, Marcel Proust simultaneously passes through the chambers of his memory, embroidering and reinventing as he goes, until at last the singular voice

of an artist is sprung from his ailing body. **Runners-Up:** Edward Yang's three-hour *Yi Yi* parses the undoing of a Taiwanese family through the quiet rhythms of jazz; Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*



wrings poetry and dance from the martial arts picture; Israeli director Amos Gitai's somber *Kipur* makes high drama out of the routinized tedium of war; Patrice Leconte's *Girl on the Bridge* works up a head of romantic steam between two lost-soul knife throwers.

Best Nonfiction Film: Marc Singer's fine *Dark Days* turns an unobtrusive, sympathetic, unsentimental eye on the lives of people who make their homes beneath the New York railway. **Runners-Up:** By the end of *My Best Friend*, Werner Herzog's account of his relationship with the actor Klaus Kinski, it's hard to tell which of the two is the greater lunatic; Josh Aronson's *Sound and Fury* examines the hope and heartbreak inspired by technologies to improve the hearing of the deaf.

Best Actor: With the sheer range of his bold, jittery performance as Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas, Spanish actor Javier Bardem transformed *Before Night Falls* from an interesting movie into a great one. **Runners-Up:** Michael Douglas can do rakes and rogues in his sleep, but *Wonder Boys*—in which he plays a bedraggled

professor unhinged by midlife crisis—asked of him much more, and got it in spades; Mark Ruffalo's gruff restraint as an errant younger brother set the subtle tone of Kenneth Lonergan's chamber piece, *You Can Count on Me*.

Best Actress: Julia Roberts was a gifted ham and a romantic lead coasting on her easy charm until *Erin Brockovich*, which turned her into a loudmouthed activist single mother—and made of her, at last, an actress. **Runners-Up:** Gillian Anderson, radiant with suffering and big hair, as the tormented Lily Bart, in *The House of Mirth*; Laura Linney, prim but bursting with sexual potential, as a repressed bank clerk, in *You Can Count on Me*.



STEVEN SODERBERGH'S *TRAFFIC* (TOP), AND JULIA ROBERTS, IN *ERIN BROCKOVICH*

Best Supporting Actor: Few young actors since James Dean have projected the smoldering intensity and sleepy intelligence emitted by Benicio del Toro as an honest cop caught in a drug war, in *Traffic*. **Runners-Up:** Robert Downey, Jr., for his febrile, diligently lascivious book editor, in *Wonder Boys*; Joaquin Phoenix, for his desperate dignity as a beleaguered liberal priest, in the otherwise daft *Quills*;

Philip Seymour Hoffman, for his quietly mad turn as rock critic Lester Bangs, in *Almost Famous*.

Best Supporting Actress: In *Pollock*, Marcia Gay Harden brings a brittle, hec-toring vitality to her role as the painter Lee Krasner, who was also Jackson Pollock's ranting, devoted wife. **Runners-Up:** Frances McDormand, for her wry authority both as Michael Douglas's lover, in *Wonder Boys*, and as the rock journalist's bulldozing mother, in *Almost Famous*; Lupe Ontiveros, for her deadpan solidity as a theater manager with playwright potential, in *Chuck & Buck*.

The Turkey 2000 Award: No contest—*Battlefield Earth*.

ELLA TAYLOR IS A FILM CRITIC FOR *LA WEEKLY*.

DANCE & THEATER

by Nancy Dalva and John Istel

NUREYEV'S BALLET BLANC

La Bayadère, the ballet classic choreographed by Marius Petipa in 1877, was first brought to the West by the Kirov Ballet in 1961, on the same tour from which Rudolf Nureyev so famously defected. This month the Paris Opera Ballet tours it to San Francisco, in the Nureyev version. (After his fabulous dancing years, he became the POB artistic director, a position he held at his death.) His staging of *La Bayadère*—which has a story preposterous even for an art form rife with dancing vegetables and evil spells—gives full sway to its ephemeral beauty: the miraculous (usually fourth) act called “Kingdom of the Shades.” (It takes place in the land of the dead, a not infrequent ballet locale.) Across the back of the stage stretches a ramp down which the corps of ballerinas, ghostly in white tutus, enter one by one, in a mesmerizing repetitive progression. There is no greater role for a corps de ballet than this, and the French corps, famous for their elegance (but of course) and their pliancy, cast a potent spell. That this ballet blanc, or white ballet, preceded minimalism in the dance arts by some one hundred years is an interesting, if peripheral, consideration. Those who love the ballet will simply be enraptured. The rest of the story involves an Indian temple dancer (the eponymous “bayadère”), a handsome but faithless warrior, a poisoning, and such; and there is a fabled pas de deux involving a scarf. Ballet fans, take note! (War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, April 30, May 1–3; Segerstrom Hall, Costa Mesa, May 8, 9, 11–13.) —N.D.

MEANING IN MERCE

At the end of Merce Cunningham's dance called *Interscape*, there is an entrance. Out from the wings steps lovely Jeannie Steele, now the company's senior female. She walks out alone across the stage and stops, as if waiting for something or someone, and right there, in media res, the dance is over. Upon seeing it, you might think something like this: *There goes Merce, entering the twenty-first century!* Along for the ride is Robert Rauschenberg, who in the middle of the last century was the first artistic director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and is still, from time to time, its scenic artist. Rauschenberg's jewel-colored backdrop, preceded by an identical front curtain in gray scale, is reminiscent of one of his collages, being made up, as it is, of found images of this and that—with that being a huge rendering of a duck. (Why a duck?) (Why not a duck?) The dancers wear unitards that look like postage stamps from exotic climes, as they go about their marvelous business, which—in the usual Cunningham protocol—has nothing to do with the decor or the wonderful sonorous cello score echoing around it. Dancers come and go, appear and disappear. Everything accumulates, and it all must mean something, for how else could a dance fill you with such yearning, such tranquility, such pleasure? *How grand*, you think, *Merce and Bob, still crazy after all these years.* (Merce Cunningham Dance Company, City Center, New York City, April 3, 5–7; Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, California, May 4–5.) —N.D.

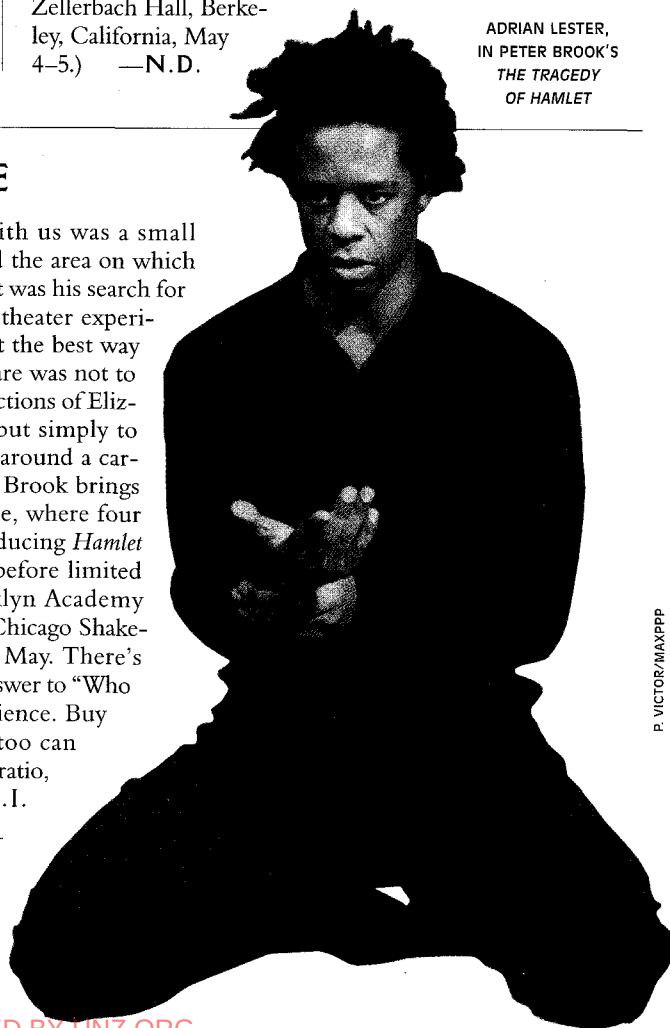
ADRIAN LESTER,
IN PETER BROOK'S
THE TRAGEDY
OF HAMLET

MAGIC CARPET RIDE

In Peter Brook's *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, “To be or not to be” is not the question. Instead, the director of acclaimed efforts like *Marat-Sade*, in the '60s, and *The Mahabharata*, in the '80s, ends his “condensed” investigation by having Horatio repeat Shakespeare's first line, “Who is there?” Brook thereby questions, as in his '90s adaptation of Oliver Sacks's neurological case histories, *The Man Who*, the nature of both identity and cultural memory. The most obvious answer is that Adrian Lester, the Jamaican-born English actor best known for his featured role in the film *Primary Colors*, is Hamlet. Exploring other lines of inquiry, Brook pares the play to two and a half hours, uses only eight actors, and does away with many minor characters. Brook's spare asceticism (he once wrote, “the true process of construction involves at the same time a sort of demolition”) was developed on the road. After forming an international acting company and touring villages around the world, he wrote, “During our travels, to Africa and other parts of the world, all

we would take with us was a small carpet that defined the area on which we would work.” It was his search for the “there” in the theater experience. “We saw that the best way to study Shakespeare was not to examine reconstructions of Elizabethan theatres, but simply to do improvisations around a carpet.” This month, Brook brings his carpet to Seattle, where four theaters are coproducing *Hamlet* in a hockey rink, before limited runs at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, in May. There's another obvious answer to “Who is there?": the audience. Buy a ticket, and you too can respond, “I am, Horatio, I am.” —J.I.

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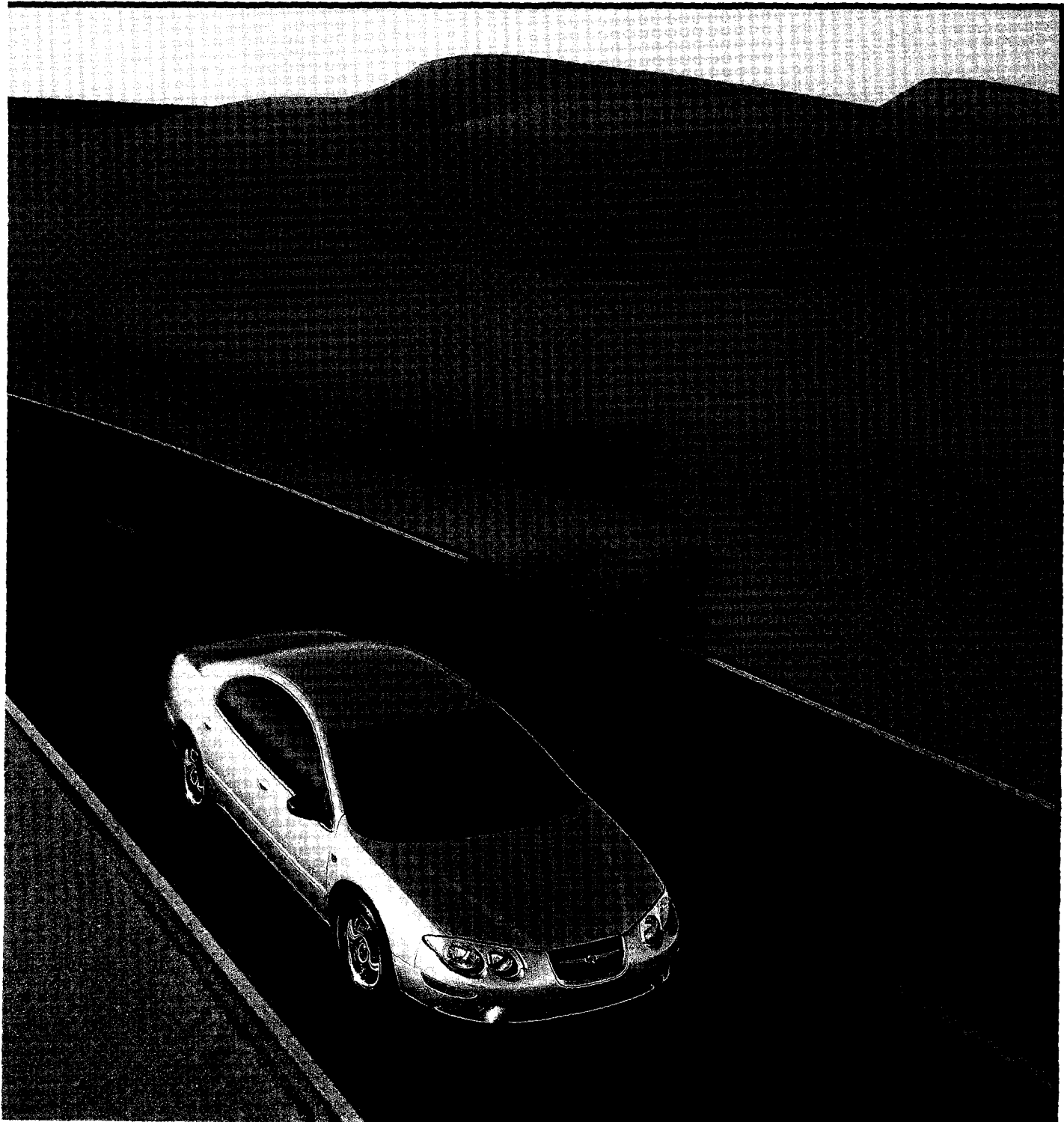


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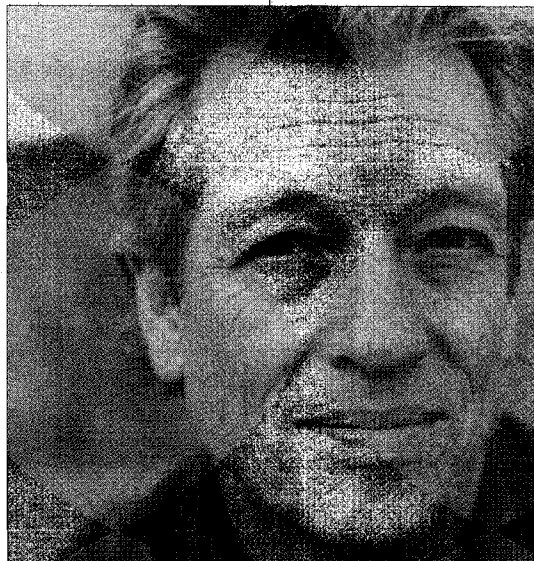
POPULAR MUSIC & JAZZ

by Bob Blumenthal and Charles M. Young

FITTING TRIBUTES

Having just turned thirty, saxophonist Chris Potter can claim as much achievement and ongoing promise as any former jazz wunderkind. Championed by Marrian McPartland as a high school student and hired by bebop legend Red Rodney while still a teenager, Potter absorbed tradition early, then kept expanding his scope. His status among the most demanding musicians is confirmed by recent affiliations with Dave Holland, Dave Douglas, and Steely Dan; and *Gratitude*, Potter's first album for Verve, summarizes his gifts for making tricky meters flow and complex harmonies cohere. *Gratitude* contains compositions in tribute to departed and living idols, yet Potter is too canny and inspired to grow enslaved to this—or any—concept. The tenor sax, his primary horn, opens with fitting allusions to John Coltrane and Joe Henderson, takes more liberties as it nods to the likes of Sonny Rollins, and delivers an iconoclasm all its own in homage to Lester Young. Other performances stretch further, with Ornette Coleman evoking a gentle reverie featuring Chinese wood flute and soprano sax, and Coleman Hawkins remembered with a conversational “Body and Soul” whispered by bassist Scott Colley and Potter on bass clarinet. Tender soprano sax for Wayne Shorter and explosive alto for Charlie Parker are closer to the sources without any sacrifice of personality. Colley, Kevin Hays, and Brian Blade form the rhythm section, and share Potter's conviction that a knowledge of jazz's diverse past plus open ears yields a most articulate jazz present. —B.B.

JAY BLAKESBERG



OUT FROM THE SHADOWS

John Hammond has been putting out albums every couple of years since 1962. The man surely knows how to sing, giving his forceful baritone a rollicking sneer that perfectly suits the social commentary inherent in the gutbucket blues that has been his primary interest from the beginning. But after thirty-nine years, what do you do for new material? Well, you could turn to Tom Waits, one of America's sharpest and most prolific songwriters. On *Wicked Grin* (Virgin/Pointblank) Hammond sings twelve Waits compositions, plus one traditional gospel tune (the enchanting final cut, “I Know I've Been Changed”), and he really adds something to the repertoire: namely, his vocal cords. When Waits sings, his rasp and quaver can get so heavy that it's difficult to discern the melody. Hammond has somehow preserved his voice over the decades, and its effect on Waits's lyrics is to shine a spotlight on a stage previously hidden in shadows. The shadows were beautiful and mysterious and appropriate to the material, but suddenly with Hammond you're seeing these stark hallucinations of the decaying urban landscape mixed with finely etched character portraits. The effect is a marvelous introduction to both artists. Nobody has strung images together with Waits's skill since Bob Dylan in his “Subterranean Homesick Blues” days, and nobody has illuminated those images better than Hammond. The band—simple, sweaty, guitar-oriented, bluesy—is also terrific. —C.M.Y.

JOHN HAMMOND

DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

Recording at home has become almost as cheap as writing poetry at home, which means there are more creators than consumers. And rightly so, because like every other art form, most of it is terrible. But some of it isn't, achieving a certain diamond-in-the-rough, folk art originality that can flower only outside the entertainment conglomerates. One such diamond in the very rough is Pete LaBonne, whose *Meditation Garden* (Sonic Trout) has numerous charms that transcend the savage-beast quality of the recording. Those charms include lots of highly musical hooks, which make the listener wonder what he could do in a first-rate studio as opposed to the dirt-floor cabin in upstate New York where he lives and records. Another charm is the arrangements, which are cubistically reminiscent of Captain Beefheart and His Magic

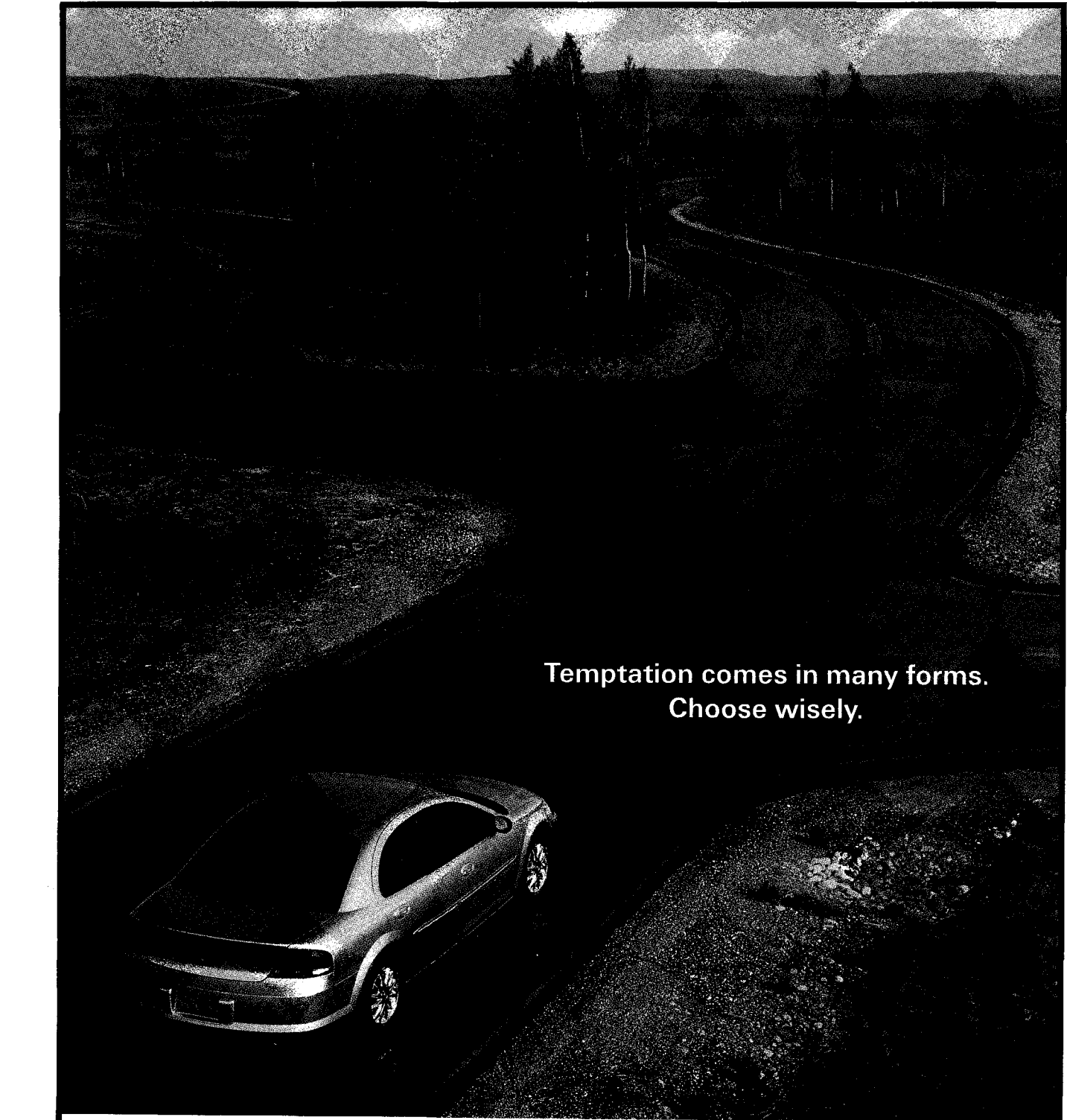
Band. Most charming is LaBonne's sense of humor, which is laugh-out-loud funny when he parodies sensitive folksingers (“Days of Yore”) or reminisces about his father making unwanted suggestions to his teenage rock-and-roll band (“Trophy Bowler”). He also achieves true political incorrectness, unlike the vast majority of comedians who claim such a stance: “If you're gonna do the driving, I'm gonna do the drinking / If you're gonna do the drinking, baby, I'm gonna do the drinking too.” One can hope that tune (“The Drivin”) doesn't become a big hit while still guffawing at its dead-on portrait of low-rent alcoholism. —C.M.Y.

BOB BLUMENTHAL, JAZZ CRITIC FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE, WON THE 2000 GRAMMY® FOR ALBUM NOTES. CHARLES M. YOUNG REVIEWS MUSIC FOR PLAYBOY AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND FOR ALLMUSIC.COM.

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THE ORGANIZATION KID

*The young men and women of America's future elite
work their laptops to the bone, rarely question authority, and happily accept
their positions at the top of the heap as part of the natural order of life*

BY DAVID BROOKS

Illustrations by Tim O'Brien

.....

A few months ago I went to Princeton University to see what the young people who are going to be running our country in a few decades are like. Faculty members gave me the names of a few dozen articulate students, and I sent them e-mails, inviting them out to lunch or dinner in small groups. I would go to sleep in my hotel room at around midnight each night, and when I awoke, my mailbox would be full of replies—sent at 1:15 A.M., 2:59 A.M., 3:23 A.M.

In our conversations I would ask the students when they got around to sleeping. One senior told me that she went to bed around two and woke up each morning at seven; she could afford that much rest because she had learned to supplement her full day of work by studying in her sleep. As she was falling asleep she would recite a math problem or a paper topic to herself; she would then sometimes dream about it, and when she woke up, the problem might be solved. I asked several students to describe their daily schedules, and their replies sounded like a session of Future Workaholics of America: crew practice at dawn, classes in the morning, resident-adviser duty, lunch, study groups, classes in the afternoon, tutoring disadvantaged kids in Trenton, a cappella practice, dinner, study, science lab, prayer session, hit the StairMaster, study a few hours more. One young man told me that he had to schedule appointment times for chatting with his friends. I mentioned this to other groups, and usually one or two people would volunteer that they did the same thing. "I just had an appointment with my best friend at seven this morning," one woman said. "Or else you lose touch."

There are a lot of things these future leaders no longer have time for. I was on campus at the height of the election season, and I saw not even one Bush or Gore poster. I asked around about this and was told that most students have no time to read newspapers, follow national politics, or get involved in crusades. One senior told me she had subscribed to *The New York Times* once, but the papers had just piled up unread in her dorm room. "It's a basic question

of hours in the day," a student journalist told me. "People are too busy to get involved in larger issues. When I think of all that I have to keep up with, I'm relieved there are no bigger compelling causes." Even the biological necessities get squeezed out. I was amazed to learn how little dating goes on. Students go out in groups, and there is certainly a fair bit of partying on campus, but as one told me, "People don't have time or energy to put into real relationships." Sometimes they'll have close friendships and "friendships with privileges" (meaning with sex), but often they don't get serious until they are a few years out of college and meet again at a reunion—after their careers are on track and they can begin to spare the time.

I went to lunch with one young man in a student dining room that by 1:10 had emptied out, as students hustled back to the library and their classes. I mentioned that when I went to college, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, we often spent two or three hours around the table, shooting the breeze and arguing about things. He admitted that there was little discussion about intellectual matters outside class. "Most students don't like that that's the case," he told me, "but it is the case." So he and a bunch of his friends had formed a discussion group called Paideia, which meets regularly with a faculty guest to talk about such topics as millennialism, postmodernism, and Byzantine music. If discussion can be scheduled, it can be done.

The students were lively conversationalists on just about any topic—except moral argument and character-building, about which more below. But when I asked a group of them if they ever felt like workaholics, their faces lit up and they all started talking at once. One, a student-government officer, said, "Sometimes we feel like we're just tools for processing information. That's what we call ourselves—power tools. And we call these our tool bags." He held up his satchel. The other students laughed, and one exclaimed, "You're giving away all our secrets."

But nowhere did I find any real unhappiness with this

state of affairs; nowhere did I find anybody who seriously considered living any other way. These super-accomplished kids aren't working so hard because they are compelled to. They are facing, it still appears, the sweetest job market in the nation's history. Investment banks flood the campus looking for hires. Princeton also offers a multitude of post-graduation service jobs in places like China and Africa. Everyone I spoke to felt confident that he or she could get a good job after graduation. Nor do these students seem driven by some Puritan work ethic deep in their cultural memory. It's not the stick that drives them on, it's the carrot. Opportunity lures them. And at a place like Princeton, in a rich information-age country like America, promises of enjoyable work abound—at least for people as smart and ambitious as these. "I want to be this busy," one young woman insisted, after she had described a daily schedule that would count as slave-driving if it were imposed on anyone.

The best overall description of the students' ethos came from a professor in the politics department and at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Jeffrey Herbst. "They are professional students," he said. "I don't say that pejoratively. Their profession for these four years is to be a student."

That doesn't mean that these leaders-in-training are money-mad (though they are certainly career-conscious). It means they are goal-oriented. An activity—whether it is studying, hitting the treadmill, drama group, community service, or one of the student groups they found and join in great numbers—is rarely an end in itself. It is a means for self-improvement, résumé-building, and enrichment. College is just one step on the continual stairway of advancement, and they are always aware that they must get to the next step (law school, medical school, whatever) so that they can progress up the steps after that.

One day I went to lunch with Fred Hargadon, who has been the dean of admissions at Princeton for thirteen years and was the dean of admissions at Stanford before that. Like all the administrators and faculty members I spoke with, Hargadon loves these students, and he is extraordinarily grateful for the opportunity to be around them. "I would trust these kids with my life," he told me. But he, like almost all the other older people I talked to, is a little dis-

quieted by the achievement ethos and the calm acceptance of established order that prevails among elite students today. Hargadon said he had been struck by a 1966 booklet called "College Admissions and the Public Interest," written by a retired MIT admissions director named Brainerd Alden Thresher. Thresher made a distinction between students who come to campus in a "poetic" frame of mind and those who come in a "prudential" frame of mind. "Certainly more kids are entering in a prudential frame of mind," Hargadon said. "Most kids see their education as a means to an end."

They're not trying to buck the system; they're trying to climb it, and they are streamlined for ascent. Hence they are not a disputatious group. I often heard at Princeton a verbal tic to be found in model young people these days: if someone is about to disagree with someone else in a group, he or she will apologize beforehand, and will couch the disagreement in the most civil, non-confrontational terms available. These students are also extremely respectful of authority, treating their professors as one might treat a CEO or a division head at a company meeting.

"Undergrads somehow got this ethos that the faculty is sacrosanct," Dave Wilkinson, a professor of physics, told me. "You don't mess with the faculty. I cannot get the students to call me by my first name." Aaron Friedberg, who teaches international relations, said, "It's very rare to get a student to challenge anything or to take a position that's counter to what the professor says." Robert Wuthnow, a sociologist, lamented, "They are disconcert-

ingly comfortable with authority. That's the most common complaint the faculty has of Princeton students. They're eager to please, eager to jump through whatever hoops the faculty puts in front of them, eager to conform."

For the generation of runners of things which came to power in the Clinton years, at least a modest degree of participation in college-years protest was very nearly mandatory. The new elite does not protest. Young achievers vaguely know that they are supposed to feel guilty about not marching in the street for some cause. But they don't seem to feel guilty. When the controversial ethicist Peter Singer was hired by Princeton, there were protests over his views on euthanasia. But it was mostly outsiders who protested, not students. Two years ago the administration outlawed the



Nude Olympics, a raucous school tradition. Many of the students were upset, but not enough to protest. "It wasn't rational to buck authority once you found out what the penalties were," one student journalist told me. "The university said they would suspend you from school for a year." A prudential ethos indeed.

Part of this is just Princeton. It has always been the prepriest of the Ivy League schools. It has earned a reputation for sending more graduates into consulting and investment banking than into academia or the arts. But this is also what life is like at other competitive universities today. In the months since I spoke with the Princeton students, I've been at several other top schools. Students, faculty members, and administrators at those places describe a culture that is very similar to the one I found at Princeton. This culture does not absolutely reflect or inform the lives and values of young Americans as a whole, but it does reflect and inform the lives and values of an important subset of this generation: the meritocratic elite. It is this elite that I am primarily reporting on in this article, rather than the whole range of young people across the demographic or SAT spectrum. It should also be said, though, that the young elite are not entirely unlike the other young; they are the logical extreme of America's increasingly efficient and demanding sorting-out process, which uses a complex set of incentives and conditions to channel and shape and rank our children throughout their young lives.

It will surprise no one who has kids to discover that social-science statistics support that description. Not just Princetonians lead a frenetic, tightly packed existence. Kids of all stripes lead lives that are structured, supervised, and stuffed with enrichment. Time-analysis studies done at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research provide the best picture of the trend: From 1981 to 1997 the amount of time that children aged three to twelve spent playing indoors declined by 16 percent. The amount of time spent watching TV declined by 23 percent. Meanwhile, the amount of time spent studying increased by 20 percent and the amount of time spent doing organized sports increased by 27 percent. Drive around your neighborhood. Remember all those parks that used to have open fields? They have been carved up into neatly trimmed soccer and baseball fields crowded with parents in folding chairs who are watching their kids perform. In 1981 the association U.S. Youth Soccer had 811,000 registered players. By 1998 it had nearly three million.

Today's elite kids are likely to spend their afternoons and weekends shuttling from one skill-enhancing activity to

the next. By the time they reach college, they take this sort of pace for granted, sometimes at a cost. In 1985 only 18 percent of college freshmen told the annual University of California at Los Angeles freshman norms survey that they felt "overwhelmed." Now 28 percent of college freshmen say they feel that way.

But in general they are happy with their lot. Neil Howe and William Strauss surveyed young people for their book *Millennials Rising* (2000); they found America's young to be generally a hardworking, cheerful, earnest, and deferential group. Howe and Strauss listed their respondents' traits, which accord pretty well with what I found at Princeton: "They're optimists ... They're cooperative team players ... They accept authority ... They're rule followers." The authors paint a picture of incredibly wholesome youths who will correct the narcissism and nihilism of their Boomer parents.

Not only at Princeton but also in the rest of the country young people today are more likely to defer to and admire authority figures. Responding to a 1997 Gallup survey, 96 percent of teenagers said they got along with their parents, and 82 percent described their home life as "wonderful" or "good." Roughly three out of four said they shared their parents' general values. When asked by Roper Starch Worldwide in 1998 to rank

**They're so clean, inside and out.
Baby Boomers may be tempted to
utter a little prayer of gratitude:
Thank God our kids aren't the
royal pains in the ass that we were.**

the major problems facing America today, students aged twelve to nineteen most frequently named as their top five concerns selfishness, people who don't respect law and the authorities, wrongdoing by politicians, lack of parental discipline, and courts that care too much about criminals' rights. It is impossible to imagine teenagers a few decades ago calling for stricter parental discipline and more respect for authority. In 1974 a majority of teenagers reported that they could not "comfortably approach their parents with personal matters of concern." Forty percent believed they would be "better off not living with their parents."

Walk through any mall in America. Browse through the racks at Old Navy and Abercrombie & Fitch and the Gap. The colors are bright and chipper. The sales staff is peppy. The look is vaguely retro—upbeat 1962 pre-assassination innocence. The Gap's television ads don't show edgy individualists; they show perky conformists, a bunch of happy kids all wearing the same clothes and all swing-dancing the same moves.

In short, at the top of the meritocratic ladder we have in America a generation of students who are extraordinarily bright, morally earnest, and incredibly industrious. They like to study and socialize in groups. They create and join organizations with great enthusiasm. They are responsible,

safety-conscious, and mature. They feel no compelling need to rebel—not even a hint of one. They not only defer to authority; they admire it. “Alienation” is a word one almost never hears from them. They regard the universe as beneficent, orderly, and meaningful. At the schools and colleges where the next leadership class is being bred, one finds not angry revolutionaries, despondent slackers, or dark cynics but the Organization Kid.

THE ORIGINS OF THE ORGANIZATION KID

To understand any generation, or even the elite segment of any generation, we have to keep reminding ourselves when it was born and what it has experienced. Most of today’s college students were born from 1979 to 1982. That means they were under ten years old when the Berlin Wall fell, and so have no real firsthand knowledge of global conflict or Cold War anxieties about nuclear war. The only major American armed conflict they remember is Desert Storm, a high-tech cakewalk. Moreover, they have never known anything but incredible prosperity: low unemployment and low inflation are the normal condition; crime rates are always falling; the stock market rises. If your experience consisted entirely of being privileged, pampered, and recurrently rewarded in the greatest period of wealth creation in human history, you’d be upbeat too. You’d defer to authority. You’d think that the universe is benign and human nature is fundamentally wonderful.

But the outlook of these young people can’t be explained by economics and global events alone. It must also have something to do with the way they were raised. As the University of Michigan time-analysis data show, this is a group whose members have spent the bulk of their lives in structured, adult-organized activities. They are the most honed and supervised generation in human history. If they are group-oriented, deferential to authority, and achievement-obsessed, it is because we achievement-besotted adults have trained them to be. We have devoted our prodigious energies to imposing a sort of order and responsibility on our kids’ lives that we never experienced ourselves. The kids have looked upon this order and have decided that it’s good.

Childhood is indeed a journey, a series of stations on the way to adulthood. Snapshots of a few of the stations of contemporary childhood will show how the Organization Kid came to be.

Infancy. We used to think that children were shaped by God, or by dark oedipal impulses, but as the twenty-first century dawns, we know better. We know that children are shaped by the interaction of their DNA and their environment. In the books and magazines that cater to parents, children are described neither as mysterious creatures, driven by the sort of subterranean passions with which

Freud concerned himself, nor as divine innocents. Instead biology has displaced psychology and theology: there is a scientifically discernible structure to human life, and it is inscribed in our genetic code. If something goes wrong, it is because there was a genetic flaw, or because the synapses were not cultivated properly. In either case we may be able to supply a remedy.

“If you’re a new parent,” begins the introductory essay in a *Newsweek* special issue on children, “your baby had the good fortune to be born at a truly remarkable moment in human history, when science has given us extraordinary new tools for understanding what kids need to thrive physically, emotionally and intellectually.” The issue is a survey of recent literature and offers an encapsulation of the ethos of contemporary child-rearing. The essay continues,

At the dawn of the 21st century, we no longer have to guess about the best way to raise a child ... researchers studying cognitive development have used sophisticated imaging technology to track the constant interplay of genetics and environment. Though they still have much to learn, they have laid down the basic building blocks of a comprehensive understanding of how experiences shape growth. It turns out to be something like the way a sculptor chips away at a block of marble; you have to work with what you’ve got, but skill, patience and persistence make all the difference.

Your child is the most important extra-credit arts project you will ever undertake. The *Newsweek* special issue provides information about the creature parents will be sculpting. It describes the cerebellum, the basal ganglia, and the motor cortex; accompanying diagrams show the locations of different brain activities. There are intimidating warnings: for example, although each baby develops trillions of synapses, about half of them have died off by adulthood. Even before birth children need stimulation and feedback if they are to build a strong web of brain connections. The pressure is on.

If you walk through the parenting section of your local bookstore, you’ll find such titles as *Building Healthy Minds*, *Baby Minds: Brain-Building Games Your Baby Will Love*, and *Right From Birth: Building Your Child’s Foundation for Life*. If you go to an upscale toy store, in addition to innocent playthings you will find sophisticated development tools designed for fetus and infant cultivation. Even parents who didn’t buy *WombSong Serenades*, a musical collection designed to stimulate babies’ fetal brain activity, can probably still raise a perfect child if they fill the first weeks of his or her life with full doses of Mozart. My local Buy Buy Baby, the infant-oriented megastore, offers at least half a dozen selections, including *Mozart for Babies’ Minds* (featuring the Violin Concerto no. 3), *Mozart Playtime* (with the Minuet in F Major), the *Parents Magazine Classical Music for*

Baby Mozart collection (Serenade no. 13 in G Major), and *Mozart for Toddlers* (Symphony no. 35). Parents just have to choose which one will produce the best synaptic responses in their child's cerebral cortex.

They can continue their baby's mental development with other brain-enhancement products. For example, the Tiny Love Gymini 3-D Activity Gym (a 1996 *Parenting* magazine Toy of the Year) offers high-contrast graphics to stimulate sight and pattern recognition. Car Seat Gallery flash cards can be slipped into clear-plastic pockets to stimulate brain activity during those minivan rides. Babies can move on from there to the Playskool Kick Start Busy Crib Center, which utilizes natural kicking movements to activate music, other sounds, and blinking lights, and the Lamaze Infant Development System, which features a series of devices, including stacking rings, for various phases of infant development.

Slightly older kids can move up to Sesame Street's Elmo Picture Quiz, because it's never too early to work on test-taking skills, and the Fun & Learn Phonics Bus, with interactive animals to help with letter recognition. The Skidoo 'n' Learn Solar System might be next on the curriculum, followed by either Language Little dolls—bilingual dolls that speak English and Spanish, French, Italian, or Mandarin Chinese—or the Growing Smart “lap-top computer,” which improves numeric, color, and spatial-recognition skills.

All of the literature is studded with reassurances for parents whose babies are not clearing developmental hurdles ahead of the other infants in the day-care center. Childhood is a journey, not a race, the experts say. That, say the parents of the coming elite, may be fine for future Piggly Wiggly clerks of America. Moms and dads who want the best and the most for their precious children know better. They know they must construct proper environments and experiences if they are going to get the most out of their child's genetic stock. The time for molding that little burbler is now. Accomplishment begins with the first breaths of life.

Elementary School. No one has done a meticulous scientific study of the subject, but my impression is that the big-backpack era began in the mid-1980s. Kids began carrying larger and larger backpacks to school every year; by the early 1990s I saw elementary school students lugging storage containers that were bigger than they were. I'd watch them trooping into the school yard and wonder what would happen to a kid who lost his balance and tipped backward onto his pack. He'd lie there like a stranded beetle, face skyward, arms and legs flailing in the air, unable to flip over again. Would he simply be stuck, pinned to the pavement by the weight of his mathematics texts, until someone came to the rescue?

Perhaps the most important event in ushering in the

big-backpack era was the release of the report *A Nation at Risk*, on April 26, 1983. Commissioned by Terrel Bell, Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education, the report decried the “rising tide of mediocrity” plaguing American schools and it caused an immediate sensation. The problem, it said, was that schools had become too loose and free-flowing. Students faced a “cafeteria style curriculum” that gave them too many choices. They were graduating from high school having spent much of their time in elective gut classes. They didn't do enough homework. They weren't given enough “rigorous examinations” and standardized tests, nor were they forced to meet stringent college-admissions requirements.

The report represented a rejection of an era that celebrated “natural” education, student-centered diversity, and spontaneity, and that cultivated creativity over discipline and nonconformity over conformity. *A Nation at Risk* bid farewell to all that, and said it was time to reassert authority and re-establish order. Schools needed to get back to basics.

The message took, and the effect has been dramatic. During the 1960s and 1970s schools assigned less and less homework, so that by 1981 the average six-to-eight-year-old was doing only fifty-two minutes of homework a week. By 1997 the amount of homework assigned to the average child of the same age had doubled, to more than two hours a week. Meanwhile, the school day, which had shortened during the sixties and seventies, has steadily lengthened since, as has the school year. Requirements have stiffened. Before 1983 the average school district required one year of math and one year of science for high school graduation. Now the average high school calls for two years of each. The culture of schools has tightened. In the 1970s, rebelling against the rigid desks-in-a-row pedagogy of the 1950s, schools experimented with open campuses and classes without walls. Now the language of education reform has changed, and the emphasis is on testing, accountability, and order.

Especially order: increasingly, and in surprising numbers, kids whose behavior subverts efficient learning are medicated so that they and their classmates can keep pace. The United States produces and uses about 90 percent of the world's Ritalin and its generic equivalents. In 1980 it was estimated that somewhere between 270,000 and 541,000 elementary school students were taking Ritalin. By 1987 around 750,000 were. And the use of the drug didn't really take off until the 1990s. In 1997 around 30,000 pounds were produced—an increase of more than 700 percent over the 1990 production level.

Far from all of that Ritalin goes to elementary school kids, but the Ritalin that does is prescribed most frequently in upper-middle-class suburban districts—where, one suspects, the achievement ethos is strongest. Some physicians believe that 10 percent of all children have the sort of con-

duct disorder—attention-deficit disorder, oppositional defiant disorder—that could be eased with Ritalin or some other drug. It is stunning how quickly we have moved from the idea that children should be given freedom to chart their own learning to a belief that adults have a responsibility to reshape the minds of kids whose behavior deviates from the standard. As Ken Livingston wrote in *The Public Interest* in 1997, “In late twentieth-century America, when it is difficult or inconvenient to change the environment, we don’t think twice about changing the brain of the person who has to live in it.” And as Howe and Strauss wrote in *Millennials Rising*, “Ironically, where young Boomers once turned to drugs to prompt impulses and think outside the box, today they turn to drugs to suppress their kids’ impulses and keep their behavior inside the box ... Nowadays, Dennis the Menace would be on Ritalin, Charlie Brown on Prozac.”

The end result of these shifts in pedagogy and in pharmacology is that schools are much more efficient and productive places, geared more than ever toward projecting children into the stratosphere of success. Authority and accountability have replaced experimentation and flexibility.

Playtime. I suspect that before long, law schools will begin sponsoring courses in the new field of play-date law. A generation ago, of course, children did not have play dates; they just went out and played. But now upscale parents fill their kids’ datebooks with structured play sessions. And they want to make sure not only that the children will be occupied at somebody’s house but also that the activities undertaken will be developmentally appropriate, enriching, and safe. Parental negotiations over what is permissible during these sessions can take on a numbing complexity. Americans being Americans, surely it won’t be long before such negotiations end up in a court of law.

Many of the disputes in these talks revolve around what future lawyers will call VSIs (video-screen issues). Should there be a complete ban on using the computer during play dates, or should kids be restricted to didactic video games, such as the programs that enhance typing skills? What about Nintendo and PlayStation? Other disputes involve homework rituals, anxiety about pets, and

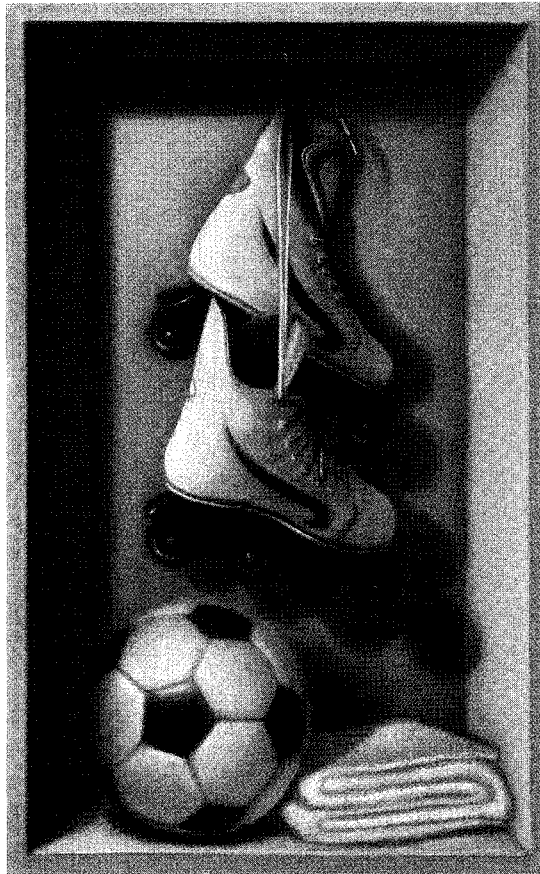
sibling-control measures. But the most-heated talks usually revolve around safety issues.

Will the nanny or parent transporting the children be using a cell phone while driving? Have all the child-safety seats recently been checked by a certified safety-seat professional? Are electrical outlets in the home protected by childproof covers? Do the oven controls have kid guards? Is there a foam bumper pad around the stone fireplace (such as the kind available through the Right Start catalogue)? What about the toilet—has it been lid-locked so that children don’t accidentally fall in and drown? And the yard—has it been aerated to make the ground softer in case of falls? Is there enough soft rubber under the outdoor play equipment?

No candy will be permitted, obviously. Sneaking chocolate into the diet in the form of a chocolate-chip granola bar is dubious. Mini-carrots are usually acceptable, though they can present a choking hazard. Sugar and refined wheat should be avoided for kids with food-related hyperactivity triggers. Most organic vegetables are acceptable.

Other cultures controlled behavior by citing divine commandments. We control behavior by enacting safety rules. And we’ve all noticed that these rules are growing stricter and stricter by the year. Not long ago young kids bounced around in the back seat of the family sedan; nowadays any parent who allowed that would be breaking the law and would be generally viewed as close to a child abuser. Not long ago kids rode bikes unencumbered. Now a mere scooter ride requires body armor, and in many families kids aren’t permitted to ride out of sight of the house.

A few years ago, while researching a magazine article, I visited the camp where I had spent summers as a camper and a counselor from 1969 to 1983. When I was a camper, roughhousing was part of life. Counselors would pound us on our chests and we’d feel privileged to have their attention. Dead arms and Indian belly rubs filled our ample free time. Now the state’s health authorities have tightened the definitions of physical abuse and sexual abuse, so noogies and wedgies and all that pounding are impermissible. Every year a psychotherapist visits the camp to brief the staff on child abuse. When I was a camper, only nonswimmers wore life preservers on the lake. Now everyone does. Then there



were no fences around the beaches. Now the state mandates barriers in front of the swimming areas (although the other two miles of lakefront are still open). Now camp authorities must fill out an accident report after each injury, in case of future litigation, and the director must attend risk-management seminars in the off-season. Staff life, too, is different. Two decades ago staff parties were held every Saturday night, usually with beer. Now those are outlawed: too risky.

Reading magazines published for camp directors, I found that my camp was still on the permissive side. A Florida law requires background checks on all camp counselors. The American Camping Association's magazine is full of safety advice: "For most drills, [tennis] balls should be fed across the net," writes Robert Gamble, the tennis director at a New Hampshire camp, in a typical piece of risk-reduction advice. "This protects the instructor should a camper lose control and overhit."

Presumably, parents in the past cared as much about their kids' safety as parents today do. But they took far fewer precautions than parents today, and exerted far fewer controls over kids' behavior. Perhaps they thought it was important that children learn to take risks in order to develop courage. Or perhaps they thought that getting into scrapes is part of childhood, and that parents have no right to let their own worries dominate their children's growth.

Adolescence. Adolescence is a complicated time, and maybe no single snapshot can sum it up. But reading through some of the best recent literature on the subject—Patricia Hersch's *A Tribe Apart*, Kay Hymowitz's *Ready or Not*, Thomas Hine's *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager*—one is struck by how many people are grappling in different ways with a common quandary: too much space. At some point in the past sophisticated parents cottoned on to the idea that rebellion and experimentation are part of the natural order of growing up, and that parents of teenagers should therefore give their kids enough freedom and space to explore and define themselves. But these new books and a shelf's worth of foundation reports now assert that kids today do not seem to want as much freedom and space as they have been granted. So the task for parents is to define boundaries for their adolescents, to offer continual guidance and discipline. Two decades ago parents were advised to withdraw from their teens' lives as those teens flew off to adulthood. Now they are advised to serve as chaperones at all-night graduation parties.

The U-turn is dramatic. In 1967 the U.S. Supreme Court heralded the liberationist age with its decision in the *Gault* case. The Court held that students have the same due-process rights as adults. That decision restricted the ways in which schools could assert paternalistic authority, but it was also a sign of the times. Children and teens should be left free to be themselves. As the legal scholar Martha Mi-

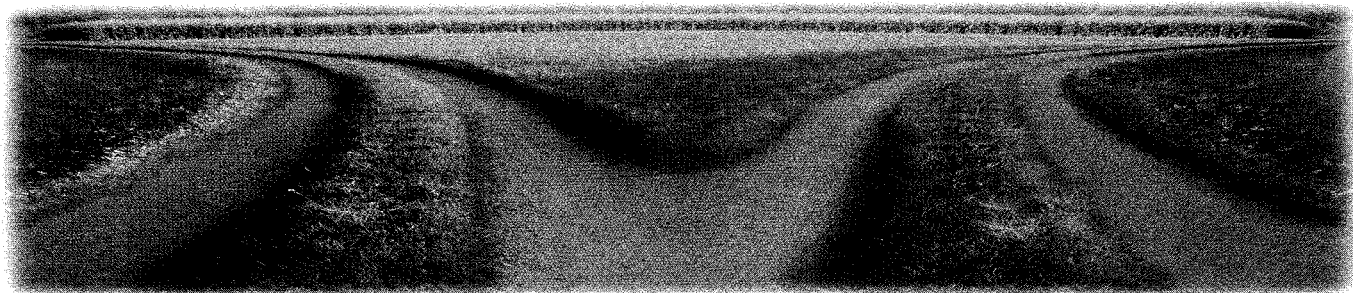
now summarized it in an essay in *From Children to Citizens* (1987), the decision was part of a cultural and "legal march away from the conception of the child as a dependent person." Many high schools in the seventies and eighties adopted open-campus policies. Students had to show up for class, but beyond that they were free to come and go as they pleased; the high school was essentially turned into a college campus. The Emancipation of Minors Act, passed by the California legislature in 1982, enabled teenagers to sign contracts, own property, and keep their earnings. It transformed them into quasi adults.

The prevailing view today couldn't be more different. The 1997 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health emphasized that the most powerful factor in determining the well-being of young people is the presence of parents and adults who are actively engaged in supervising and setting goals for teenagers' lives. A 1993 study, *Talented Teenagers*, found that teens need security and support if they are going to explore. Hersch's highly acclaimed *A Tribe Apart* is an angry rebuke to parents who have given their teens too much space. Hersch writes,

The lives of the kids in this book illustrate in subtle and not so subtle ways the need for adult presence to help them learn the new lessons of growing up. Kids need adults who bear witness to the details of their lives and count them as something. They require the watchful eyes and the community standards that provide greater stability ... The kids in the book who do best are those who have a strong interactive family and a web of relationships and activities that surround them consistently.

So when we survey American childhood today, we see that a quiet revolution has taken place. The Romantics—and the neo-Romantics of the 1960s and 1970s—thought that children were born with an innate wisdom and purity. They were natural beings, as yet uncontaminated by the soul-crushing conventions of adult society. Hence they should be left free to explore, to develop their own creative tendencies, to learn at their own pace. Now, in contrast, children are to be stimulated and honed. Parents shouldn't hesitate to impose their authority. On the contrary, it is now pretty widely believed that the killings at Columbine and similar tragedies teach us that parents have a duty to be highly involved in the lives of their kids.

Today's ramped-up parental authority rests on three pillars: science, safety, and achievement. What we ambitious parents know about the human brain tells us that children need to be placed in stimulating and productive environments if they are going to reach their full potential. What we know about the world tells us that it is a dangerous place: there are pesticides on our fruit, cigarettes in the school yards, rocks near the bike paths, kidnappers in the woods. Children need to be protected. And finally, what we know about life is that sorting by merit begins at birth and



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never ends. Books about what to expect in the first year lay out achievement markers starting in the first month, and from then on childhood is one long progression of measurements, from nursery school admissions to SATs. Parents need to be coaching at their child's side.

Imagine being a product of this regimen—one of the kids who thrived in it, the sort who winds up at elite schools. All your life you have been pleasing your elders, performing and enjoying the hundreds of enrichment tasks that dominated your early years. You are a mentor magnet. You spent your formative years excelling in school, sports, and extracurricular activities. And you have been rewarded with a place at a wonderful university filled with smart, successful, and cheerful people like yourself. Wouldn't you be just like the students I found walking around Princeton?

THE MORAL LIFE OF THE ORGANIZATION KID

When students enter college today, they are on familiar ground. After throwing off curfews, dress codes, and dormitory supervision in the 1970s, most colleges are reimposing their authority and reasserting order, just as high schools and families are. Some universities are trying to restrict or eliminate drinking. Many are cracking down on fraternity hazing rites. Others have banned Dionysian rituals such as lascivious costume balls and Princeton's Nude Olympics. University regulations intrude far more into the personal lives of students, and the students seem to approve.

As part of an effort to cajole students into behaving responsibly, many colleges have tried to provide places where they can go to amuse themselves without alcohol or drugs. Princeton has just completed a new student facility in the Frist Campus Center, formerly Palmer Hall, an old science building. On a walk from the library to Frist one may pass Prospect House, formerly the president's residence and now the faculty club, with a sparkling, glass-walled restaurant overlooking beautifully maintained gardens. On the lawns nearby, if the weather is tolerable, a drama group might be rehearsing, and other students might be bent over heavy books or laptops. The students are casual, but they look every bit as clean-cut as students in the early 1960s did, as if the intervening forty years of collegiate scruffiness had never happened. Almost all the men shave every day. Their hair is trim and freshly shampooed. Very few students wear tattoos or have had their bodies pierced—so far as one can see—in unapproved places. Many of the women wear skirts, or sundresses when the weather is warm. "I lived an incredibly ragged life," Kathryn Taylor, class of 1974, now an administrator in alumni affairs, told me of her college days. "It never would have dawned on me to try to look nice. They seem to be much more conscious of apparel."

It was only relatively recently that Princeton went coed, but one wouldn't know it. The male students are modern,

enlightened men, sensitized since the first grade to apologize for their testosterone. The women are assertive and make a show of self-confidence, especially the athletes. Members of the women's soccer team have T-shirts that read YOUNG, WILD AND READY TO SCORE. Posters advertising a weekend's races say CROSS COUNTRY! IT'S EXCITING TO WATCH SEXY WOMEN RUN!—brashness that would be socially unacceptable if the boys tried it.

The Frist Campus Center is a Neo-Gothic structure, built in 1907, that once housed nuclear experiments. Coats of arms are etched in stone on the façade, from which an imposing statue of Benjamin Franklin looks down at visitors. But that is the old Princeton; the building's ground level has been turned into the up-to-date student center, where rows of computer stations allow students to check their e-mail and where modern banalities have been painted on the walls: "Only by deliberating together about moral questions will we find mutual respect and common ground.—Amy Guttmann." "The locusts sang and they were singing for me.—Bob Dylan." "Race matters.—Cornel West." "If I'm not out there training, someone else is.—Lynn Jennings."

Beyond are a billiards room, a set of low chairs where students can read while watching ESPN on a big-screen TV, a kiosk selling Princeton memorabilia, and a convenience store in which you can buy Nantucket Nectars, Arizona green tea with ginseng, raspberry Snapple, and the full array of Gatorade and Powerade, in flavors such as Fierce Melon and Arctic Shatter.

Bulletin boards throughout are festooned with recruiting posters from investment firms. One, from Goldman Sachs, shows a photo of a group of wholesome-looking young people relaxing after a game of lunchtime basketball. The text reads "Wanted: Strategists, Quick Thinkers, Team Players, Achievers." Another, from the business-consulting firm KPMG, shows a picture of a pair of incredibly hip-looking middle-aged people staring warmly into the camera. The text reads "Now that you've made your parents proud, join KPMG and give them something to smile about." It's hard to imagine a recruiting poster of a few decades ago appealing to students' desire to make their parents happy.

Downstairs is a cafeteria with a variety of food stations—pasta, a grill, salads, daily specials. Except that the drinks are not free, it reminded me of the dining hall at Microsoft, in Redmond, Washington. A wall of glass looks out over a lawn. Small groups of happy-looking people—Asian-American kids here, African-American kids there—sit at the tables. They are talking mostly about their workloads, and even their conversational style is polite and slightly formal. "Hello, ladies ..." one young woman calls out to a group of her friends. "How are you?" a young man asks a young woman in greeting. "I'm fine, thanks," she replies. "How are you?"

They're so clean, inside and out. They seem like exactly

the sort of young people we older folks want them to be. Baby Boomers may be tempted to utter a little prayer of gratitude: Thank God our kids aren't the royal pains in the ass that we were to our parents.

But the more I talked to them and observed them, the more I realized that the difference between this and preceding generations is not just a matter of dress and comportment. It's not just that these students work harder, are more neatly groomed, and defer to their teachers more readily. There are more-fundamental differences: they have different mental categories.

It takes a while to realize this, because unlike their predecessors, they don't shout out their differences or declare them in political or social movements. In fact, part of what makes them novel is that they don't think they are new. They don't see themselves as a lost generation or a radical generation or a beatnik generation or even a Reaganite generation. They have relatively little generational consciousness. That's because this generation is for the most part not fighting to emancipate itself from the past. The most sophisticated people in preceding generations were formed by their struggle to break free from something. The most sophisticated people in this one aren't.

"On or about December 1910 human character changed," Virginia Woolf famously declared. Gone, she wrote, were the old certainties, the old manners, the deference to nineteenth-century authority. Instead human beings—at least the ones in Woolf's circle—were starting to see the world as full of chaos and discontinuity. Einstein smashed the notion of absolute time and space. Artists from Seurat to Picasso deconstructed visual perceptions. James Joyce's *Ulysses* scrambled the narrative order of the traditional novel. Rebels upended Victorian sexual mores. And later in the century, when the modernists were exhausted, the post-modernists came along to tell us that life is even more disordered and contingent than even Virginia Woolf could have imagined. Words are detachable from their meanings. History has no grand narratives. Everything is just shifting modes of perception, a maelstrom of change and diversity.

For those growing into adulthood during most of the twentieth century, therefore, the backdrop to life was the loss of faith in coherent systems of thought and morality. Sophisticated people knew they were supposed to rebel against authority, reject old certainties, and liberate themselves from hidebound customs and prejudices. Artists rebelled against the stodgy mores of the bourgeoisie. Radicals rebelled against the commercial and capitalist order. Feminists rebelled against the patriarchal family. And in the

latter half of the twentieth century a youth culture emerged, which distilled these themes. Every rock anthem, every fashion statement, every protest gesture, every novel about rebellious youth—from *The Catcher in the Rye* to *On the Road*—carried the same cultural message: It's better to be a nonconformist than a conformist, a creative individualist than a member of a group, a rebel than a traditionalist, a daring adventurer than a safe and responsible striver. "We hope for nonconformists among you," the theologian Paul Tillich preached to college audiences in 1957, "for your sake, for the sake of the nation, and for the sake of humanity."

Today's elite college students don't live in that age of rebellion and alienation. They grew up in a world in which the counterculture and the mainstream culture have merged with, and co-opted, each other. For them, it's natural that one of the top administrators at Princeton has a poster of the Beatles album *Revolver* framed on her office wall. It's natural that hippies work at ad agencies and found organic-ice-cream companies, and that hi-tech entrepreneurs quote Dylan and wear black jeans to work.

For them, it's natural that parents should listen to Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, and the Doors—just like kids. They don't have the mental barriers that exist between, say, the establishment and rebels, between respectable society and the subversive underground.

For them, all those categories are mushed together. "They work for Save the Children and Merrill Lynch and they don't see a contradiction," says Jeffrey Herbst, the politics professor. Moreover, nothing in their environment suggests that the world is ill constructed or that life is made meaningful only by revolt. There have been no senseless bloodbaths like World War I and Vietnam, no crushing economic depressions, no cycles of assassination and rioting to foment disillusionment. They've mostly known parental protection, prosperity, and peace.

During most of the twentieth century the basic ways of living were called into question, but now those fundamental debates are over, at least among the young elite. Democracy and dictatorship are no longer engaged in an epic struggle; victorious democracy is the beneficent and seemingly natural order. No more fundamental arguments pit capitalism against socialism; capitalism is so triumphant that we barely even contemplate an alternative. Radicals no longer assault the American family and the American home; we accept diverse family patterns but celebrate family and community togetherness. The militant feminists of the 1960s are mostly of a grandmotherly age now. Even theological conflicts have settled down; it's fashionable to be religious so long as one is not aggressively so.

The most sophisticated people in preceding generations were formed by their struggle to break free from something. The most sophisticated people in this one aren't.

Unlike their elders, in other words, these young people are not part of an insurrection against inherited order. They are not even part of the conservative reaction against the insurrection. The debates of the Reagan years are as distant as the trial of the Chicago Seven, which is as distant as the Sacco and Vanzetti case. It's not that they reject one side of that culture war, or embrace the other. They've just moved on. As people in northern California would say, they're living in a different place.

The world they live in seems fundamentally just. If you work hard, behave pleasantly, explore your interests, volunteer your time, obey the codes of political correctness, and take the right pills to balance your brain chemistry, you will be rewarded with a wonderful ascent in the social hierarchy. You will get into Princeton and have all sorts of genuinely interesting experiences open to you. You will make a lot of money—but more important, you will be able to improve yourself. You will be a good friend and parent. You will be caring and conscientious. You will learn to value the really important things in life. There is a fundamental order to the universe, and it works. If you play by its rules and defer to its requirements, you will lead a pretty fantastic life.

COMPELLED BY THE KNIGHTLY SPIRIT

One has to go quite far back to find another group of sophisticated students who took for granted the idea that the universe is a just and orderly place—back to a time before World War I, before modernism, before all the chaos and disruption that Virginia Woolf described. To find another age of such equanimity one has to go back to the Edwardian era and the years leading to World War I. Then, too, a generation of elite students accepted the established order and the life paths it laid out for them. Then, too, people had a sense that there was an underlying biological organization to life—though it had to do with Darwin rather than with DNA. Then, too, elite students idealistically committed themselves to community service, to moral and political reform, while feeling aloof from and generally disgusted by professional politics. Then, too, a pretty rigorous set of social mores regulated behavior—though it had to do with the code of the gentleman, rather than with health and safety concerns and political correctness.

Walking around Princeton, I saw the monuments to that earlier elite, and I couldn't help comparing it with the new one we are creating today. The school has buildings and developments named after some of the men who were students in that era—John Foster Dulles, James Forrestal. The old eating clubs are where the characters from F. Scott Fitzgerald's Princeton dined and drank. It is easy to imagine Professor Woodrow Wilson talking and teaching in the Neo-Gothic buildings.

Of course, in obvious ways the students in those days

were very different from the students now. Then they were all male, all white, almost all blue bloods. They were WASP aristocrats, not multicultural meritocrats. Today we congratulate ourselves that our code is so much more enlightened than theirs. We aren't nearly as snobbish as they were, or as anti-Semitic, or as racist, or as sexist. We aren't as closed-minded—or so we tell ourselves.

I've never met anybody who would trade our social order for theirs, who wants to go back to that old Princeton world. And yet ... and yet there are disturbing ghosts around the campus. The old order haunts this one, and whispers that maybe something was lost as well as gained when we sacrificed all for the sake of high achievement, safety, and equal opportunity. In some of the imposing old portraits, for example, I saw a moral gravity and a sense of duty that are missing from the faces of the recent presidents, who look like those friends of your parents who encouraged you to call them by their first names—friendly, unassuming guys in tweed jackets. Those old Princetonians were not professional administrators ministering to professional students. The code of the meritocrat was not their code, and maybe in some ways theirs was the more demanding code. For the most striking contrast between that elite and this one is that its members were relatively unconcerned with academic achievement but went to enormous lengths to instill character. We, on the other hand, place enormous emphasis on achievement but are tongue-tied and hesitant when it comes to what makes for a virtuous life.

The Princeton of that day aimed to take privileged men from their prominent families and toughen them up, teach them a sense of social obligation, based on the code of the gentleman and noblesse oblige. In short, it aimed to instill in them a sense of chivalry.

"You must either discover your duty or else create it and then swear allegiance to its high behests," John Hibben, the president of Princeton, told graduating students in 1915.

Who will prove that the spirit of peace may become the spirit of valor, and assure the solidarity and progress of our nation? Who but the choice men of our land,—the men of exceptional privilege, who by a process of natural selection have passed from one degree of excellence to another in the arduous discipline of mind and character through years of preparation for a life of service ... Centuries ago the knight errant rode forth on the adventure of service to champion the cause of the weak and the wronged wherever they might be found. For him there was no clear call to any definite undertaking, but compelled by the knightly spirit, he resolutely set himself to seek undiscovered duty somewhere beyond the far horizon.

Princeton did have some Bible classes as a means of teaching virtue and character, but one has the sense that

the school didn't really believe these things could be taught in the classroom. Documents from those days reveal a much denser social fabric at Princeton, and it was in the social sphere that the really important lessons were learned. There were more customs, dances, processions, and bonfires; they created a setting in which students competed for glory, for the laurels of being known as a big man on campus. (I asked today's Princeton students who the BMOCs were, and many didn't even know what the term meant. Those who did said that the concept didn't apply to their Princeton.)

Students in those days passed through harrowing extracurricular challenges and ordeals. There were clubs to compete for, hazing rituals to endure, brutal combats to win. Life at Princeton was a series of tests designed to cultivate manliness and determination. Each year, for example, the freshman and sophomore classes would stage a snowball fight. The library archives contain a picture of three Princeton freshmen after one such fight. Their eyes are swollen shut, their lips are broken open, they have contusions across their cheeks and signs of broken noses and broken jaws.

The primary virtue that Princeton tried to instill, in exhortation after exhortation, was courage. "Teaching men manhood" was one of the important tasks of Harvard, a professor wrote in that school's alumni magazine in 1902. John Hibben, who was a representative figure of his age, told a Princeton alumni group in 1913,

It would be pitiful indeed if we were constrained to confess in reference to our graduates, as Homer stated of the Trojan hero,—“He came forsooth to battle in golden attire like a girl.” Homer also adds that this unprepared warrior was met by Achilles, who slew him and robbed him of his wealth. We must fit men to work and to fight for our day, and to be ready when called to devote their fighting powers to that cause of righteousness which appeals to them as their particular vocation.

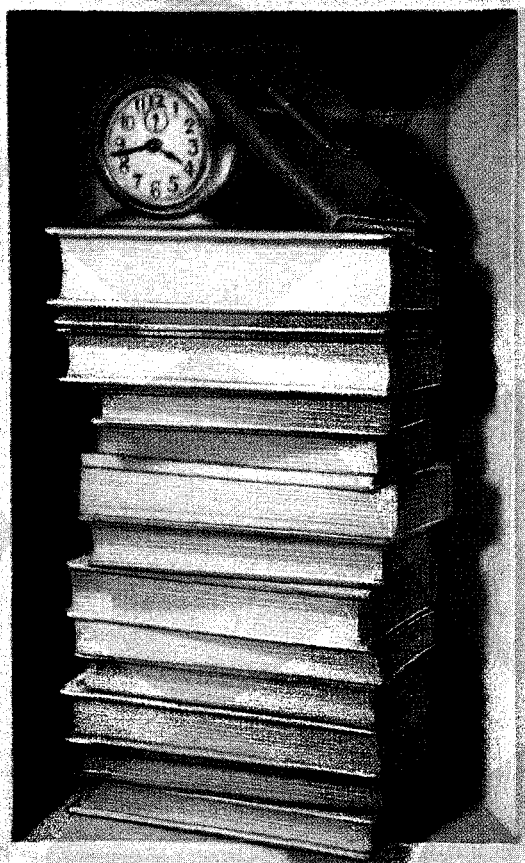
Of course, one form of ordeal reigned above all others: football. When John Hibben was president and F. Scott Fitzgerald was an undergraduate, one Princeton football star personified the ideals of the age—manly courage, duty,

courtesy, honor, and service. He was Hobart Amory Hare Baker, a young man who wouldn't have a prayer of being admitted to Princeton today. Hobe Baker was born into a prominent but not particularly affluent Main Line Philadelphia family on January 15, 1892. After his parents divorced, he was sent off to St. Paul's School, where he became a legendary athlete. He arrived at Princeton in 1910, preceded by his reputation. He was only five feet nine inches and 160 pounds, but he was thickly muscled. He could walk downstairs on his hands, and he entertained his friends by jiggling his back muscles in time to a song. He once won a bet that he could walk from Princeton to New York City in ten hours. He was extraordinarily handsome, from a distance looking a bit like the Duke of Windsor, though he was sturdier and more muscular, with symmetrical features and a crown of blond hair that seemed never to fall out of place. He was also a meticulous dresser.

Baker appears in Fitzgerald's novel *This Side of Paradise*, as the “slim and defiant” football captain, Allenby, who is the embodiment of manly grace, casually aware that “this year the hopes of the college rested on him.” Baker was the star of both the football team and the hockey team. In those days both games were different. Football was more defensive, slower but more savage. There was no passing. Teams would trade punts, hoping to get slight advantages in field position. The key play was the punt return. Baker would position himself a few yards behind where the punt was to land so that he could get a running start

and catch the ball at a full sprint. He didn't wear a helmet. It became a cliché to compare him to Sir Calahad, the solitary knight charging bravely into the breach.

There were no bureaucratized university sports programs or athletic scholarships or professional coaching in Baker's day. The games were more like medieval tournaments, ordeals in which the young men of the governing classes could build character and cultivate manly courage. Fatalities were relatively common in collegiate football until President Theodore Roosevelt—the epitome of the upper-class manly man—tried to instill some restraint. Speaking for the age, Charles William Eliot, the president of Harvard, declared that “effeminacy and luxury are even worse evils than brutality”; sports could transform “a stoop-



ing, weak, and sickly youth into [a] well-formed robust" one.

Hobey Baker was at least as famous for his sportsmanship as for his athletic prowess. Though opposing teams often tried to injure him, he never retaliated; he had two penalties called on him in his entire college hockey career, both hotly contested. He went to the opposing locker room after each game to thank his rivals for a good match. "Nothing was quite so characteristic as his acute modesty," his biographer, John Davies, wrote in *The Legend of Hobey Baker* (1966). "He was always polite and obliging, except when talk got around to his athletic exploits, and then he could be curt and even difficult."

Baker dominated the Princeton of his day. "The aura of Hobey Baker permeated the campus, and yet on personal contact ... he seemed somewhat withdrawn," one of his classmates told Davies. A national celebrity, Baker was, as the Fitzgerald scholar Arthur Mizener once put it, the "nearly faultless realization of the ideal of his age." He was recognized as a model for all young boys, and he was something of a campus god.

After college Baker went off to Wall Street, following the Princeton herd. But he was bored at J. P. Morgan, somewhat at a loss in the everyday world of commerce. World War I solved his problem. He enlisted at once as an aviator—Sir Galahad of the air—and flew aerial combat in France. American newspapers followed his exploits, exaggerating them and declaring him an ace before he had shot down a single enemy plane (he ended up shooting down three). In war Baker found perfect happiness—the camaraderie of the pilots and the thrill of combat. His athletic skills served him well, and he was promoted to squadron commander, with 206 men and twenty to twenty-four planes under him. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre and showed some disappointment when the Armistice was signed.

His death was like something out of a cheap novel. Six weeks after the war was over, on December 21, 1918, his tour of duty ended. He received orders to return home. He decided he would make "one last flight." His comrades argued vehemently with him, saying that making a last flight violated a sacred tradition in aviation; it was bad luck. He insisted, and took up not his own plane but a recently repaired machine that needed to be tested. The engine stalled. There was a way to survive such a predicament, but it involved wrecking the plane. Baker tried a trickier maneuver that might have enabled him to land the plane intact; he ran out of room and crashed nose-first into the ground. He bled to death in the ambulance.

Needless to say, that romantic end transformed Baker from an ideal to a legend. And everyone seems to have understood immediately that he was symbolic of a dying ethos. It wasn't just the modesty, and the grace, and the amateur spirit—it was the chivalric world view. The alumni directory for Hobey Baker's class of 1914 twenty-five years

after graduation reveals that a number of his classmates named their sons for him.

One more thing must be said about the chivalric code of that era, at least as it was articulated. It involved more than just shaking hands with one's opponents after a game and venturing acts of derring-do on the football field or the battlefield. The conflict that educators of the time talked about more than any other was internal conflict, between the good and the evil in each of us. John Hibben and others talked so much about courage and battle because they believed that a human being is half angel, half beast, and that the two sides wage lifelong warfare over the soul. People who made the high-minded addresses of that era were comfortable talking about evil and sin and the devil. Here's an excerpt from Hibben's address to the graduating students in 1913.

You, enlightened, self-sufficient, self-governed, endowed with gifts above your fellows, the world expects you to produce as well as to consume, to add to and not to subtract from its store of good, to build up and not tear down, to ennoble and not degrade. It commands you to take your place and to fight your fight in the name of honor and of chivalry, against the powers of organized evil and of commercialized vice, against the poverty, disease, and death which follow fast in the wake of sin and ignorance, against all the innumerable forces which are working to destroy the image of God in man, and unleash the passions of the beast. There comes to you from many quarters, from many voices, the call of your kind. It is the human cry of spirits in bondage, of souls in despair, of lives debased and doomed. It is the call of man to his brother ... such is your vocation; follow the voice that calls you in the name of God and of man. The time is short, the opportunity is great; therefore, crowd the hours with the best that is in you.

No doubt a lot of the students who were sitting in the audience that day were stuck-up country-house toffs, for whom this kind of talk merely delayed a trip in their roadsters to a New York nightclub. But many of the students raised on similar exhortations—including Teddy Roosevelt and John Reed at Harvard and Hobey Baker, Allen Dulles, Adlai Stevenson, and F. Scott Fitzgerald at Princeton—seem to have absorbed some sense that life is a noble mission and a perpetual war against sin, that the choices we make have consequences not just in getting a job or a law-school admission but in some grand battle between lightness and dark.

"LOVE AND SUCCESS AND BEING HAPPY"

This is what the comparison between the students of Hobey Baker's day and the students of today tells us: Then the leaders of Princeton were quite conscious of the fact that they were cultivating an elite. They thought it was only just and proper that these well-

born men be at the top of society. The task was to mold them into gentlemen. Now administrators at top-tier schools know they are educating an elite but they seem to feel guilty about the whole notion of elitism and elite status. Today's elite don't like to think of themselves as elite. So there is no self-conscious code of chivalry. Today's students do not inherit a concrete and articulated moral system—a set of ideals to instruct privileged men and women on how to live, how to see their duties, and how to call upon their highest efforts.

Although today's Princeton and today's parents impose all sorts of rules to reduce safety risks and encourage achievement, they do not go to great lengths to build character, the way adults and adult institutions did a century ago. They don't offer much help with the fundamental questions. "We've taken the decision that these are adults and this is not our job," Jeffrey Herbst says. "There's a pretty self-conscious attempt not to instill character." Herbst does add that students are expected to live up to the standards that apply to academic life—no plagiarism, no cheating. But in general the job of the university is to supply the knowledge that students will need to prosper, and, at most, to provide a forum in which they can cultivate character on their own. "This university doesn't orchestrate students' lives outside the classroom," says

Princeton's dean of undergraduate students, Kathleen Deignan. "We're very conservative about how we steer. They steer themselves." As the admissions officer Fred Hargadon puts it, "I don't know if we build character or remind them that they should be developing it."

In America today we don't tell our children they are half brutes. It's impossible to imagine a modern university president mentioning the devil or the beast in a commencement address. People don't even talk much about evil anymore, except as something that might happen far away, in Serbia or in Nazi Germany. Around us we see not evil but sickness that requires therapy. Today we speak the language of positive reinforcement.

In talking to Princeton students about character, I noticed two things. First, they're a little nervous about the subject. When I asked if Princeton builds character, they would inevitably mention the honor code against cheating, or policies to reduce drinking. When I asked about moral questions, they would often flee such talk and start discussing legislative questions. For example, at dinner one evening a young man proposed that if we could just purge the wrongs that people do to one another over the next few generations, the human race could live in perfect harmony ever after, without much need for government or laws or

prisons. I asked the other eight or nine students at the table to reflect on this, but they quickly veered off toward how long it would take to bring about this perfect world. I asked specifically if human beings were perfectible in this way. Some grunted in vague assent, and one young woman—a conservative Christian who had interned for Jesse Helms the previous summer—said that she agreed with what the young man had said. Apparently the doctrine of original sin had not left much of a mark on her.

Today's students are indeed interested in religion and good works. "In the past ten or twelve years students are no longer embarrassed about being interested in religion—or spirituality, as they call it," says Robert Wuthnow, the Princeton sociologist. "That's a huge change. People used to feel as if they had acne being raised in a religious home." I hadn't been on campus more than five minutes before I started hearing about all the students who do community service—tutoring at a charter school in Trenton, working at Habitat for Humanity-style building projects, serving food at soup kitchens. But religion tends to be more private

than public with them, and the character of their faith tends to be unrelievedly upbeat. "It's an optimistic view," Wuthnow says. "You just never hear about sin and evil and judgment. It's about love and success and being happy."

When it comes to character and virtue, these young people have been left on their own. Today's go-getter parents and today's educational institutions work frantically to cultivate neural synapses, to foster good study skills, to promote musical talents. We fly our children around the world so that they can experience different cultures. We spend huge amounts of money on safety equipment and sports coaching. We sermonize about the evils of drunk driving. We expend enormous energy guiding and regulating their lives. But when it comes to character and virtue, the most mysterious area of all, suddenly the laissez-faire ethic rules: You're on your own, Jack and Jill; go figure out what is true and just for yourselves.

We assume that each person has to solve these questions alone (though few other societies in history have made this assumption). We assume that if adults try to offer moral instruction, it will just backfire, because our children will reject our sermonizing (though they don't seem to reject any other part of our guidance and instruction). We assume that such questions have no correct answer that can be taught. Or maybe the simple truth is that adult institutions no longer try to talk about character and virtue because they simply wouldn't know what to say. John Hibben could fill books with moral instruction, but our connections to that tradition have been snapped.

Maybe adult institutions no longer try to talk about character and virtue because they simply don't know what to say. Our connections to that tradition have been snapped.

One sometimes has the sense that all the frantic efforts to regulate safety, to encourage academic achievement, and to keep busy are ways to compensate for missing conceptions of character and virtue. Not having a vocabulary to discuss what is good and true, people can at least behave well. It's hard to know what eternal life means, but if you don't smoke you can have long life. It's hard to imagine what it would be like to be a saint, but it's easy to see what it is to be a success.

The compensation works, to an extent. These young people are wonderful to be around. If they are indeed running the country in a few decades, we'll be in fine shape. It will be a good country, though maybe not a great one. The Princeton of today is infinitely more pleasant than the old Princeton, infinitely more just, and certainly more intellectual and curious. But still there is a sense that something is missing. Somehow, in the world of moral combat that John Hibben described, the stakes were higher, the consequences of one's decisions were more serious, the goals were nobler. In this world hardworking students achieve self-control; in that one virtuous students achieved self-mastery.

I had lunch one day with Robert George, a professor in Princeton's politics department. Like a lot of elite colleges, Princeton has one or two faculty members who are known as the campus conservatives. They may be liked personally, and admired for their teaching and research skills, but they are regarded as a bit odd, and dismissible. I don't, however, see anything specifically conservative in the message George offered that day (which I'm condensing from a thirty-minute portion of our conversation). "We would do our best if we could make sure our students had a dose of the Augustinian sense that there is a tragic dimension to life," he said. "That there is a sense in which we live in a vale of tears. We could make them aware of the reality of sin, by which I mean chosen evil, which cannot be cured by therapy or by science. We don't do enough to call into question the therapeutic model of evil: 'He has a problem ... He's sick.'"

"I don't mean we should have a separate course on character. We don't need to give them specific answers. We could raise this awareness—through readings and discussions in history and philosophy and literature, by reading Plato's *Gorgias*, *Othello*, or a study of the Lincoln-Douglas debates—that the conquest of the self is part of what it means to lead a successful life. It's not enough to make a corporation succeed. It's not an external problem. It doesn't lend itself to a technical solution. Four hours spent studying in the library is not self-mastery."

George described a moment when he and a colleague were urging their students not to commit plagiarism. The honor code goes against it, George told them; the Internet makes it easier to plagiarize, but also much easier for faculty members to catch plagiarists. Besides, he concluded, God

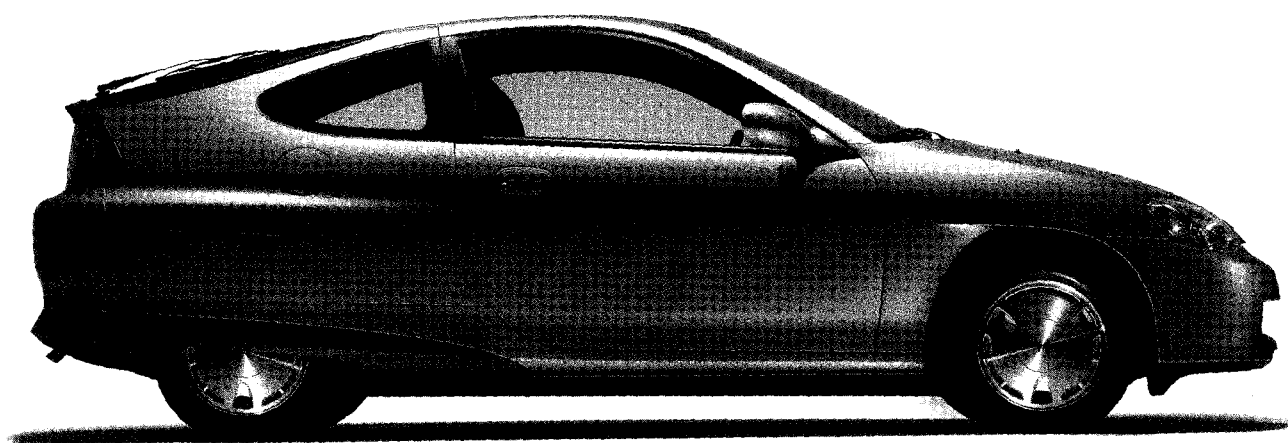
will see you doing evil. Suddenly there was an awkward shifting of chairs and a demurral from his faculty colleague. The idea that it is possible to do wrong sitting alone in your room, even if you don't cause another person any harm, is hard, George said, for modern Americans to comprehend fully. The problem is that this idea is at the heart of understanding what it means to be virtuous.

George suggested that I talk to a student he had in a few of his classes, a sophomore, who came to campus with the tragic sense that George would like to impart. This young man took me to lunch in his college dining room, and when I asked him about character-building, he spoke more comfortably and thoughtfully than anybody else I had met. He wasn't easy on himself, the way supercharged achievers have a tendency to be. "Egotism is the biggest challenge here," he said. "It can make you proud if you do well. It can make you self-assured and self-sufficient. You don't need help from other people. You won't need help from your wife. You won't give yourself over to her when you are married." He went on, talking calmly but faster than I could write. He was talking in a language different from that of the meritocrat—about what one is, rather than what one does. He really did stand out from the other students, who were equally smart and equally accomplished but who hadn't been raised with a vocabulary of virtue and vice.

Somebody once wrote a book called *Harvard Hates America*, about the supposedly alien Ivy League snobs who look down on the rest of the country. I don't get that sense when I visit Harvard, and I certainly didn't get that sense at Princeton. Princeton doesn't hate America. It reflects America. And in most ways it reflects the best of America. After all, as people kept reminding me, these are some of the best and brightest young people our high schools have to offer. They have woven their way through the temptations of adolescence and have benefited from all the nurturing and instruction and opportunities with which the country has provided them. They are responsible. They are generous. They are bright. They are good-natured. But they live in a country that has lost, in its frenetic seeking after happiness and success, the language of sin and character-building through combat with sin. Evil is seen as something that can be cured with better education, or therapy, or Prozac. Instead of virtue we talk about accomplishment.

Maybe the lives of the meritocrats are so crammed because the stakes are so small. All this ambition and aspiration is looking for new tests to ace, new clubs to be president of, new services to perform, but finding that none of these challenges is the ultimate challenge, and none of the rewards is the ultimate reward. ▀

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*One of the most polluted cities in America learns
to capitalize on its contamination*

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

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Butte, Montana, lives on its toxic waste. It is a filthy brick city of 33,000, built on a steep hill among the remains of dead copper mines. Montanans elsewhere call it "Butte, America" in a disparaging way, as if it were somehow a separate and alien place. One can see why by hiking up the hill, past Butte's decrepit central district, past mines and union halls and a bar called Pisser's, through proletarian neighborhoods of bungalows nestled among waste heaps laced with lead and arsenic, to the Granite Mountain overlook, a memorial to 168 miners killed in 1917 in an underground fire.

Out across the horizon of snow-capped mountains lies the celebrated Montana of natural beauty, where a record number of visitors vacationed in recent years, even as the residents' incomes floated in the forty-sixth position among the fifty states. Montanans proudly call their home "The Last Great Place," though the slogan can sound wistful and forlorn. Caught in a two-tiered economy with little industry left to sustain them, they are remaking the fashionable western half of the state into an exaggeration of itself, so that even the individualists there—the guides, the survivalists, the cowboy poets—now learn at the movies how to dress and talk. Or so I've been told in Butte.

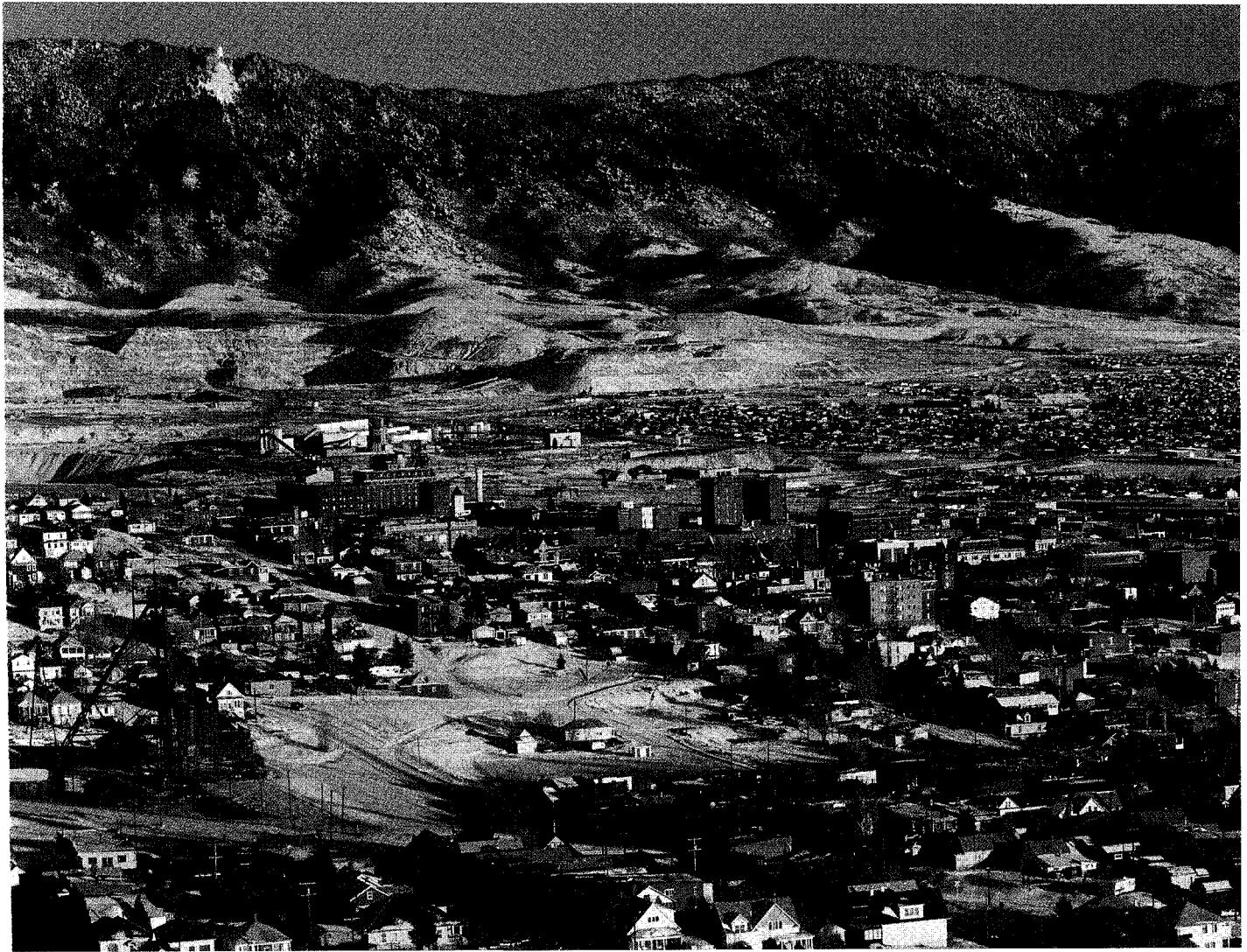
Butte's residents speak frankly about themselves as well. They say that their city is fractious and that its survival remains in doubt. Eighty years ago it had a population three times as large as today's, predominantly of Irish Catholics, but also of Serbs, Scandinavians, Italians, Chinese, and French. The immigrants, who formed labor unions that were willing to fight, infused Butte with an old-fashioned left-wing sensibility that remains a part of its character to this day. The workers' enemy was also their patron—the voracious Anaconda Mining Company, which was founded in 1891 and soon absorbed Butte's independent mines. Over the years, Anaconda sent perhaps 2,500 local men to their deaths underground in pursuit of copper ore, but it employed a far greater number of people and gave Butte its life. Because the company was so important to the community, when Anaconda said it needed to begin open-pit

mining, in 1955, it was allowed to consume long-standing neighborhoods with barely an objection.

Quarrying was the way of the future, and it was safer than tunneling. But it required less labor, which weakened the unions and meant that layoffs, once cyclical, became permanent. It was also physically destructive: over the years the open pit, known as the Berkeley, grew into a crater 1.5 miles across and 1,800 feet deep—a giant hole in the heart of town. In 1977 Anaconda Mining was near death, and the oil company ARCO bought it up. ARCO was flush with cash at the time and wanted to diversify and experiment with hard-rock mining. Within a few years the experiment began to fail. In the early 1980s ARCO closed the remaining shafts and turned off the pumps that had kept the mines from flooding. It then shut down the Berkeley Pit.

The sight from Granite Mountain today is of an industrial battlefield with smoke still hanging in the air. The city spills into the flats of the valley below with a sprawl of new houses and a shopping strip that extends to the airport. But the soul of Butte remains on the hill, in the tattered and cosmopolitan center—a red-brick commercial district, scarred by vacant lots and shuttered storefronts, but resilient and defiantly urban. This is the core that refuses to die. The streets are steep and unadorned, and eerily empty at night even in the summer. In the winter they are swept by the full force of mountain winds and snows. On the east side the central district falls precipitously into the Berkeley Pit; on the west side it melds with an old neighborhood of brick houses, most in need of repair, where the engineers and mine bosses once lived. Higher on the hill stand the miners' modest wooden houses, snaking upward in bands among the wood-and-steel hulks of the abandoned mine yards. A dozen main shafts are straddled by black steel elevator derricks, called gallows frames, which dominate the city's skyline. From them the miners were lowered as much as a mile into a labyrinth of now unreachable destinations—the most heavily mined ground in the world. It is said that the hill contains 7,000 miles of wood-framed horizontal tunnels and untold numbers of vertical shafts. Most of the shafts are closed over





Butte, Montana, with an edge of the Berkeley Pit visible on the left. The city stands on the world's most heavily mined ground

and forgotten, but every year a few of them suddenly open up—sometimes in people's back yards or basements. No one knows why dogs fall in and children do not.

Butte has bigger problems anyway. This hill, once called the richest on earth, is known now as one of the dirtiest in America. Its soils and waters are filled with lead and other toxic metals, and the creek called the Silver Bow, which flows at its base, was until recently so contaminated by runoff that it was poisoned at least 140 miles downstream, creating a plume of death that reached into the picturesque Clark Fork River and on toward the Columbia.

In 1983 the Environmental Protection Agency declared that Butte was a high-priority Superfund site—and by the way, that ARCO would have to pay for most of the cleanup. ARCO was taken by surprise. The Superfund laws had been passed in 1980, decades after most of the mess had been made and three years after ARCO bought Anaconda's liabilities. The retroactive application of the laws, though apparently constitutional, seemed unfair. Nonetheless, when threatened with triple damages by the EPA, ARCO did not

go to court, as other companies have, but began grudgingly to cooperate. Eighteen years later it remains entangled in what has grown into one of the largest Superfund sites in the United States. The costs of the cleanup have been huge. The site is especially complex because it remains inhabited. The health consequences of the pollution have been only partially studied, but they are widely assumed to be serious—lead poisoning in particular is a concern.

Meanwhile, in Butte's vast underground the shafts and tunnels, full of residual heavy metals and arsenic, have flooded—and the tainted waters have risen within the hill to a level precariously close to that of the rivers and streambeds on the surface.

Now for the paradox: The mine waters would already be spilling into the Silver Bow, further poisoning it and the rivers downstream, were it not for the existence in the middle of town of the Berkeley Pit, which by serving as a giant sump has delayed the day of reckoning. Five million gallons a day drain into the pit and mix with oxygen to form one of the most contaminated bodies of water in the world—a

brown lake of metal-laden sulfuric acid, currently 900 feet deep and steadily rising. The lake is expected to reach the critical level (about 1,100 feet) in another twenty years, at which time—if left alone—it will bleed into the aquifer and poison springs and wells, with catastrophic consequences.

That is unlikely to happen, of course, because Butte is in America, which has the wealth to clean itself up. If Congress lets ARCO off by loosening the Superfund laws (as industry believes it should), then the necessary treatment plant will be built by the EPA instead. One way or the other, the problem will be contained.

Nonetheless, the image of an acid lake is compellingly apocalyptic, and it has come to symbolize Butte's unhappy fate. Much has been made of a flock of migrating geese that landed and died in the poisons of the Berkeley Pit. Butte has been displayed in the press as a moral lesson in environmental self-destruction. Repeatedly it has been called a ghost town, in anticipation of its necessary end.

But Butte defies such easy dismissals. Indeed, its toxic wastes, however abhorrent, may prove in some way to be the city's salvation. There are those who believe that pollution may just possibly provide an important new economic base that will allow Butte if not to prosper, then to live on with dignity, and perhaps to avoid the clownishness and implicit servility that seems increasingly to color the vacationland of western Montana. If so, a man named Donald Peoples will deserve much of the credit.

Peoples is a third-generation native son, born and raised in Butte. At first he was merely another high school football star, of which Butte has had plenty. He was a hard worker, and smart enough to go off to college. Afterward, in 1962, he dutifully returned to Butte. Several years later he got a job as a football coach at Butte Central, the Catholic high school where both he and his father had played. When we first met, in the summer of 1999, he still wanted to talk about it, even after thirty years. He told me in all sincerity that he would have been content to spend his life coaching at Butte Central. Indeed, at sixty-one, he still looks the part—a tall, wide-shouldered man with gaunt cheeks, brooding eyes, and an asceticism honed by daily sessions of hard running. But as it happened, Peoples coached for only three years until, in 1972, an old friend of his persuaded him to go to work as a planner and manager for the city administration. He rose quickly within the local government. He became mayor in 1979, when he was thirty-nine, and he remained in office through multiple elections for more than a decade during the final collapse of mining in Butte and the worst years of despair. Many residents now believe that by his public displays of courage he single-handedly kept Butte from falling apart, and that—though he is no longer in government—he is still saving Butte today. History is never that simple, of course. But there are reasons more important than football that some people in Butte call Don Peoples “the coach.”

Butte has never had an easy time. It had been slowly losing population since World War I when, suddenly, in the mid-1960s, it slipped into what appeared to be a final decline. A combination of mine-yard closures and the inexorable growth of the Berkeley Pit caused real-estate prices to collapse. People began to flee the hill, abandoning their houses and small businesses by the hundreds. Butte had a powerful patron in another native son, U.S. Senator Mike Mansfield, who in 1968 tried to intervene with a typical Great Society program called Model Cities, which tripled Butte's budget, paid for repaving the streets, created new social programs for the unemployed and the poor, and tried to cut out urban blight as if it were a cancer—by tearing down more than 300 old buildings and houses. The Model Cities program lasted six years, and it softened Butte's pain. But the cancer kept spreading anyway.

Forces too large to control were to blame. Copper prices had plummeted, and in 1971 Chile expropriated Anaconda's important South American operations. The beleaguered company announced that Butte, with vast amounts of ore still lying in the ground, was Anaconda's last hope; it warned, however, that the Berkeley Pit might have to be expanded westward, across the whole of the city's central district. So bleak was the civic mood that rather than resist such a move, Butte began reflexively to give way: over the next few years, at the height of the Model Cities attempts at urban renewal, a series of fires, most of them thought to be caused by arson, destroyed more than twenty major buildings in the central district, leaving ruined blocks that remain vacant today. The fiercest of the fires exploded in JCPenney in February of 1972, blowing mannequins like corpses onto the streets and destroying thirteen businesses in a single night. Watching the fires became a Butte pastime. In 1974, when the historic Pennsylvania block burned to the ground, more than 8,500 residents gathered to watch the conflagration and in some cases to cheer it on.

That attitude was formalized the same year, by a group of leading citizens who called themselves Butte Forward and drew up plans for a radical solution to the town's decay—the staged demolition of the remaining central district, and the construction of an entirely new town center, to be built in the flats around bright offices and a shopping mall. For its proponents the plan served two purposes: it would allow Anaconda the room to survive while offering the city itself a completely fresh start. The plan seemed progressive at the time, though in retrospect its supporters, including Don Peoples, agree that it would have been a mistake. Butte was saved from it by a group of shopkeepers from the hill, who ran ads shouting “Wake Up, Butte! Don't Be Pushed Around!” Their leader was Beverly Hayes, a blunt-spoken woman who owned a burger joint called The Doghouse. She mocked the plan as a sellout to Anaconda and protested loudly against it during a series of tumultuous public hearings. In July of 1976, just as federal officials in Washington,

D.C., indicated that they would fund Butte's relocation, the city council voted it down. The emotion in Butte afterward was one of unexpected relief: suddenly everyone agreed on the need to save the central district. But then Anaconda died, and ARCO arrived on its ill-fated mission, and people continued to abandon the hill. Butte was still slipping away.

In the last days of 1978, after a bitter firefighters' strike, Butte's mayor left town for a job in Helena, and the city council appointed Don Peoples, then serving as Butte's director of community development and public works, to finish the term. Peoples was an ordinary leader at first. He instituted a program of street and sidewalk repairs, and shored up the façades of some crumbling buildings, but mostly he just rode the city's decline.

Butte hit bottom in 1982, when ARCO shut down the Berkeley Pit and flooded the mines. Thousands of people packed up and moved on, and unemployment among those who remained rose above 20 percent. Adding to the sense of doom, the EPA began sampling the water and soil on the way to declaring the city a Superfund site—a designation from which no reputation could be expected to recover.

Don Peoples now met the challenge. Having watched the grand plans fail, he believed that what the city needed was a strategy of incremental advances—anything to get it moving again. In 1983 he held a series of town meetings at which he invited hundreds of people to express their ideas for Butte's future—and having involved them, he organized a broad-based community response. Most of the initiatives were small business projects that individually didn't amount to much. Collectively, however, they began to turn the town around.

Peoples worked without respite, acknowledging his mistakes and pressing ahead with such dedication that he was able if not exactly to shame community leaders into action, then at least to elicit important new commitments from them. The Montana Power Company, which had toyed with the idea of moving its headquarters out of the central district, now promised to expand its presence instead; the hospital promised to stick around too, and to build a new cancer center, which would require an increase in staff. ARCO began to pump money into the Superfund cleanup. Then, in 1985, a Missoula construction magnate named Dennis Washington started a new open-pit mine. It was a mechanized, nonunion operation, and it employed relatively few people, but it proved that mining could still be profitable, and it symbolized the city's resilience.

Equally important to the mood that year, a group of miners erected *Our Lady of the Rockies*—a ninety-foot statue of the Virgin Mary, supported inside by a steel scaffold like a gallows frame, standing high on the Continental Divide with her hands held wide in acceptance of the ravaged city below. The statue was a genuine expression of faith, and if only in that sense it appears to have helped. The central

district continued to decline, but the city was taking heart. In 1987 *U.S. News & World Report* listed Don Peoples as one of the top mayors in the nation. By 1988 Butte's unemployment rate had dropped to that of the state as a whole, about seven percent.

But Butte had never happily shared in Montana's fate, and Peoples wanted a fuller life for it than the life that tourism could provide. He had a way of looking squarely at things. The city was undercut by its ugliness and hard winters, and by its geographic isolation. The tax breaks and subsidies it had offered in order to attract manufacturing had been exploited by companies to extract equal concessions from more-desirable towns. Some of the companies that did arrive turned out to be empty shells and stock-market scams; others were simply ill managed or impractical. Peoples insisted that Butte had to endure these bruising and to continue searching outside the valley for investors. But he also looked inside the valley, and began to wonder if the city's mining wastes, however terrible they seemed, might somehow be turned into assets. He came to realize that at the least the local pollution was no longer an embarrassment to be covered up.

The strength of that insight was its acceptance of an authentic Butte—a place with a few false fronts on its buildings but little chance of forgetting its past or engaging in Montana-style reconstructions of its identity. Butte had always been and always would be a gritty town, and Don Peoples wanted to recognize it as such. His revelation was profound. It was a step not just toward the development of a new resource but also, implicitly, toward a new form of preservation. Practically speaking, its origins lay in a Department of Energy testing facility built in the mid-1970s in a federally financed industrial park near the airport. An existing nonprofit community-development organization now called the Montana Economic Research and Development Institute took over that facility. In 1981 this organization—MERDI—in turn created a for-profit engineering company, Mountain States Energy, specifically to run the DOE's programs. Don Peoples sat on both boards. MSE's initial mission was to experiment with a power-generation technology called magneto hydrodynamics, but the company soon diversified into civil engineering and landed new contracts with various government agencies—eventually including the EPA—for a bewildering range of construction projects and the pilot-scale testing of advanced materials and processes. It operated in conjunction with the state's universities—particularly Montana Tech, Butte's once great school of mines.

MSE was an unusual company, and it remains so today. It had a hard-nosed business sense, but it was owned by a community organization and its ultimate purpose was to promote the public good. It put its headquarters in the middle of the central district, among halfway houses and ruined stores, and it ploughed its profits into the city, funding



Five million gallons of arsenic- and lead-laden water drain into the Berkeley Pit every day. The water is now 900 feet deep

scholarships, grants, and infrastructure projects that the local government could not afford. Equally important, it provided jobs for Butte residents who had technical or university training. There was a troublesome side to MSE as well: it was in some ways a provincial and insecure company, searching in vain for legitimacy and a permanent mission while presenting a public face that was a bit too bright to be entirely believable. Nonetheless, it was determined to exploit every opportunity to build a new economic base for the city.

From the start of the Superfund cleanup MSE wanted to get in on the action. The immediate problem was that ARCO didn't require its advice. ARCO's cleanup of the mines consisted mostly of old-fashioned earthmoving, an activity for which Butte—where people are known to indulge in recreational bulldozing—was particularly well prepared. “Suck, muck, and truck,” the locals called it. The technique was relatively cheap, and it served to concentrate and bury the toxins, at least for a lifetime. The EPA and ARCO agreed on a similar plan for the eventual cleanup of the

Berkeley Pit: they would pump out the water, mix in limestone to neutralize the acid, and truck the resulting gelatin to a toxic dump—or repository—to be monitored indefinitely. This promised to be a large but otherwise ordinary job.

MSE saw its chance in the national discomfort with repositories as a permanent solution for toxic waste. Under Don Peoples's guidance the company slipped in from the side, exploiting Butte's growing notoriety and MSE's own reputation for technical competence, and managed to assume control over research grants for a wide range of advanced cleanup technologies. Peoples encouraged the company to move beyond repositories, whether by incinerating the pollution, remining the wastes, or applying chemical or biological cures. The size and pace of the Berkeley Pit drama helped to ensure long-term funding and provided time to work the solutions out.

Suddenly MSE had large ambitions. Its purpose was not to change ARCO's plans for the cleanup of the pit, or even necessarily to clean up the hill, but rather to use Butte as a test bed for permanent solutions—to spin off ventures,

capitalize on new knowledge, and find work for itself around the world. For this the company needed a strong president. After a nationwide search the board realized that no one would equal its own Don Peoples. Peoples felt he had done what he could in government. In 1989 he left office and took the job at MSE. His political admirers were dismayed, and worried that he had in some sense sold out, until they realized that from his new position he was still attempting to rescue his beloved home town.

He knew it would be a rescue without end—and, indeed, after more than a decade at MSE he recognizes that his city remains at risk. Though he sometimes talks of retirement, it is difficult to believe he would choose this moment to quit. These are hard but pioneering times, and his work at MSE is starting to bear fruit. A cluster of new companies interested in pollution remediation—some directly spawned by MSE, others intending to compete with it—have sprung up in Butte. This is more or less what Peoples had always had in mind—the possibility that an entirely new industry might come to life on these polluted grounds.

CANTICLE

Beautiful repetition, the caress repeated, again,
That makes one say and repeat, “Don’t stop.”

Reiteration, restatement, the beat brushed into skin,
The pulse responding to breath, counted, touched.

Beautiful pattern of change, cyclical as blood,
The axle pivots, the planet wanders.

The moon comes back and leaves, a total story or slice
Of life, shining with meaning, like a life.

Beautiful repetition, the haze of new grass
Rises from scattered seeds, a green dawn.

A chickadee’s claim rings the seed bell by the window.
The world tilts too, a ball dented by song.

Look at it happen again, always in a new pattern:
Famine again, war, after the odd peace.

Habit, the great deadener, narrows our affections
To one face, reappearing in the mirror.

Look at it happen again, always for the first time:
Death of the father; the mother, absolute.

No way to bring them back, except to become them.
Tragic re-enactment, beautiful repetition.

—MARK JARMAN

Meanwhile, the acceptance of Butte for what it is has spread. Assertive young officials in the city government have dusted off a 1962 “National Historic Landmark” designation and are using it in radical ways to shape the Superfund cleanup: rather than allowing the EPA simply to cap the mine waste and return the land to a clean condition, they have declared that even the waste piles have historical significance, and therefore, according to the law, must be respected by federal agencies. Their idea is to leave the least toxic of the piles in their raw state, as historical monuments. For the dangerously contaminated sites that must be cleaned up and eliminated, trades can be made—swapping those sites for the preservation of the old mine buildings, for drainage and street improvements, and for an extensive new network of footpaths and parks. It is possible that the greatest result for Butte of the Model Cities program was the expertise the program created in just this sort of bureaucratic leveraging and manipulation.

But the preservation of industrial waste is more than a ploy, or a folly for reporters to write about. Don Peoples is an instinctively conservative man; he seems uncomfortable with the city’s new stridency, and uncertain about where it will lead. Nonetheless, he also seems to recognize that this public embrace of pollution is a complement to his own way of thinking, and that the honesty of such an approach is helping to attract a new generation of immigrants to the town—people who are too young or urban for him quite to appreciate, but who are smart and effective and are looking for something beyond the standard Montana. Some of those people work for MSE or its subcontractors, or for Montana Tech; others work independently, as architects, engineers, software designers, and technicians of various kinds.

So much the better if Butte does not try to be pretty. Its population, after more than eight decades of decline, has finally stabilized, and there are signs of new life for the central district, as residents of all generations slowly begin to return to the hill. MSE still suffers from its provincial insecurities and an over-reliance on government funding, but its priority remains the health of the city. Recently, for instance, it spun off its profitable civil-engineering division, selling it to the employees with the provision that the new and promising company remain based in Butte. Meanwhile, the somewhat reduced MSE brings in \$25 million a year, employs 200 people, and stands at the core of the most hopeful industry in town. Critics say that the industry is hardly more than a welfare scheme, and that welfare of any kind is bad. But MSE and similar companies in Butte are finding customers; Don Peoples predicts that the new technologies will someday stand on their own. Butte is still a hard-luck town. But it may be able to mine the only resource that will never be used up—a whole renewable world of industrial waste. ■

ON THE WEB: See the online version of this article, at www.theatlantic.com/butte, for a collection of Atlantic articles on environmental issues.



THE DESCENT by Edward Sorel

THE DAY REAGAN WAS SHOT

The author reveals previously undisclosed transcripts of the deliberations in the White House Situation Room

BY RICHARD V. ALLEN

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Twenty years ago this spring, on March 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot by a young man named John W. Hinckley Jr. while leaving a Washington hotel. The time was 2:30 P.M. As the President's national-security adviser, I was informed of the shooting almost at once and went immediately to the White House.

A crowd of shocked but curious White House staff members had gathered in the office of James A. Baker, Reagan's chief of staff. Baker himself was at the hospital, along with the White House counselor Edwin Meese. Secretary of State Alexander Haig arrived at the White House shortly after I did. I asked Haig, Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan, the White House counsel Fred F. Fielding, the domestic adviser Martin Anderson, and David Gergen, a member of the White House staff, to accompany me to the Situation Room, located in the basement of the White House, secure behind electronic locks and guarded by uniformed Secret Service agents. That would prevent superfluous staffers from barging into the meeting, limit leaks, and effectively activate "crisis management," about which there had been a major flap only a few days before, when the White House made the decision to entrust that function to Vice President George Bush, much to Haig's consternation. The group was soon joined by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger; Attorney General William French Smith; Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis; Richard Darman, a presidential deputy assistant; and Admiral Daniel Murphy, the Vice President's chief of staff. At about 3:30 Meese called from the hospital. He reaffirmed that "the national command authority" rested with Cap Weinberger, in the absence of the Vice President, and said that "Al is to calm other governments."

All we knew in the first hour was that the President had been shot. We had virtually no information about the assailant or his motives, or about whether he had acted alone. Vice



President Bush was in the air over Texas. (I remember vividly the image of Haig, in a trench coat, shouting over a bad connection, "George, it's Al ... turn around ... turn around!") Bush was on his way back, but he had no means of secure voice communications from his aircraft. The first assessments by the Pentagon revealed that more Soviet submarines than usual were off the East Coast.

By tradition, and to encourage complete candor in the most-secret discussions and exchanges, there are no tape recorders allowed in the Situation Room's conference area. On this occasion, however, I considered a recording to be absolutely essential in order to preserve an indisputable record. I instructed my top assistant, Janet Colson, to bring my personal tape recorder to the conference room. The tape recorder was placed in the center of the table, in plain view of all participants. There was no surreptitious taping of this event, and no one objected. Following are selections from some of these tapes. They are being made public for the first time, twenty years after the event.

"DO WE HAVE A FOOTBALL?"

In the interest of military readiness, Weinberger sought to take prudent security measures without raising the defensive condition—"Defcon," which has five stages, 5 being normal except for the U.S. Strategic Command (formerly the Strategic Air Command) and forces in Korea, whose normal condition is 4. After discussion about the location of the "football"—a briefcase containing the nuclear release-code sequences that is always at the President's side—Haig began to question Weinberger about the security measures.

COLSON: Someone out there wants to know if you want the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

ALLEN: I don't think we need him here ... Cap is the—Cap is here.

HAIG: Cap is the—and the football is near the Vice President—so that's fine.

COURTESY RONALD REAGAN LIBRARY

ALLEN: We should get one over here. We have a duplicate one here.

HAIG: Get the football over here.

ALLEN: There is one at the military aide's office. The football is in the closet ... I don't think we need the Chair of the Joint Chiefs over here, do you? Let's leave him over at the NMCC [National Military Command Center, at the Pentagon]. This is a draft statement, but I want to put something else in it.

FIELDING: Do you want any other Cabinet members?

ALLEN: No, they should all be told to stand by. Here's the copy of that draft statement [on the President's condition]. You don't want the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs over here?

WEINBERGER: Well, I want ... not over here, I want him ...

ALLEN: At the NMCC.

WEINBERGER: Yeah, and they should go on alert or be ready to go on alert. SAC [the Strategic Air Command] went on alert with Kennedy's assassination.

The group paused to watch Gergen's briefing from the press room. The conversation moved on for a time to Hinckley and to the condition of the press secretary, Jim Brady, badly wounded in the shooting. (At a later point in the tapes Regan observed, apropos of Hinckley's attack, "Hand-gun control—we better think that policy through again in light of this. I'll have to testify on this, so we better get something started on hand-gun control.") The discussion then returned to national security.

HAIG: We'll be on a straight line from the hospital. So anything that is said, before it's said, we'll discuss at this table ... and any telephone calls that anybody is getting with instructions from the hospital come to this table *first* [raising voice] ... **RIGHT HERE!** And we discuss it and know what's going on.

WEINBERGER: I have the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs coming on, Jones, in just a second. We're going to tell him to get alerts to the Strategic Air Command and such other units that seem to him to be desirable at this point.

HAIG: What kind of alert, Cap?

WEINBERGER: It's a standby alert ... just a standby alert.

HAIG: You're not raising readiness?

WEINBERGER: No, but the main thing is that he should stay there in the Command Center. Not here.

HAIG: Right.

DARMAN: Is that information not to be released up till ...

ALLEN: It'll leak ...

WEINBERGER: Well, until we know more about it. The alert, they'll probably put themselves on alert, but I just want to be sure.

HAIG: Do we have a football here? Do we?

ALLEN: Right there.

REGAN: Al! Don't elevate it! Be careful!

HAIG: Absolutely! Absolutely! That's why I toned down the message that was going out ... there's no reason for that.

WEINBERGER: Yeah, I don't think anything that talks

about continuity of government or anything ... that sounds like we know a lot more than we do.

REGAN: This is apt to turn out to be a loner.

WEINBERGER: I think it was!

MURPHY: Cap, what do they mean by "alert"?

WEINBERGER: Well, an alert is ...

MURPHY: We've been down this path once before with Henry [Kissinger].

WEINBERGER: That's right. The alert simply is that there are conditions which may require very quick actions.

MURPHY: Are you sure that doesn't mean Defcon Three ... or Four?

WEINBERGER: No, no ... I'll fill in ... It's a matter of being ready for some later call ...

HAIG: Yeah, I think the important thing, fellows, is that these things always generate a lot of dope stories, and everybody is running around telling everybody everything that they can get out of their gut ... and I think it's god-damn important that none of that happens. The President, uh, as long as he is conscious and can function ...

WEINBERGER: Well, that's right ... the Vice President's in an Air Force plane.

ALLEN: Well, just let me point out to you that the President is not now conscious.

HAIG: No, of course not.

"THE HELM IS RIGHT HERE"

Perhaps the most memorable moment from the hours after the assassination attempt was Secretary of State Haig's misunderstanding of the constitutional chain of succession, first in the Situation Room and then on national television. Needless to say, issues of legal authority were on everyone's mind.

FIELDING: A rather technical thing is that the President can pass the baton temporarily under the law, and we're preparing that right now ... toward the eventuality ...

HAIG: That's what I was going to ask next. What are the legal ...

FIELDING: It's being prepared right now.

HAIG: That's the pass the baton to the Vice President ...

FIELDING: On a temporary basis. It passes to him in writing from the President until the President rescinds it.

HAIG: Has somebody gone into the Eisenhower precedent on this? I think we need that from a public-relations point of view.

FIELDING: Well, we may not want to put it out.

HAIG: No, the things you want to make note of are first, precisely what happened, notification of the Vice President, assembly of the key crisis Cabinet, preservation of continuity of command, and that it was handled.

WEINBERGER (*on the telephone to the Pentagon*): No, I think what we want to do is increase the degree of alertness so that in the event there should be anything required shortly, that could be done within a minimum amount of time ...

Gergen interrupted to ask a question, and Haig declared that he himself was constitutionally the person in charge.

GERGEN: Al, a quick question. We need some sense, more better sense of where the President is. Is he under sedation now?

HAIG: He's not on the operating table.

GERGEN: He is on the operating table!

HAIG: So the ... the helm is right here. And that means right in this chair for now, constitutionally, until the Vice President gets here.

GERGEN: I understand that. I understand that.

HAIG: Yeah.

The other Cabinet members and senior staff knew better—there were three others ahead of Haig in the constitutional succession. But Haig's demeanor signaled that he might be ready for a quarrel, and there was no point in provoking one. In any event Weinberger had the military command authority.

WEINBERGER: We've got the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Joint Chiefs in the Military Command Center. The alert has been raised from a normal condition to a standby condition under which they can move to a much higher degree very quickly. There is no, there will be no publicity about it. And the degree of alertness at the moment is going to commanders only, so that there would not be a lot of leaks right away from the men. All of that on the basis that at this point it looks like an isolated incident, but there isn't enough information and we want to remain alert. So that's where the armed forces stand.

At this point I moved a few feet from the Situation Room conference area to the adjacent communications center to speak on a secure telephone line with Meese, at the hospital. I brought the tape recorder with me. During those few minutes deputy press secretary Larry Speakes answered questions from the White House press corps. Asked who was running the government, Speakes responded, 'I cannot answer that question at this time.'

Haig, alarmed, came to the communications center and took me by the arm, and we moved toward the stairs to the main floor of the White House. Because I had been on the phone, I was unaware of what Speakes had said.

HAIG: Why don't you come with me?

ALLEN (to staff): Okay, I'll be back later ...

HAIG: How do you get to the press room?

ALLEN: Up here.

HAIG: Yeah ... he's just turning this into a goddamned disaster!

ALLEN: Who has?

HAIG: How can he walk into the press room ... Speakes ...

ALLEN: Did he walk in up here?

HAIG: He's up there now.

ALLEN: Christ almighty, why's he doing that?

PRESS STAFFER: They want to know who's running the government.

ALLEN: Oh, well, just a minute ...

HAIG: We'll assemble them ... we'll ...

STAFFER: You're coming back? [*shouting*] They're coming back again ... The Secretary of State! The Secretary of State!

There was chaos in the press room. Speakes stood there, frazzled and slightly dazed, sensing that his remarks had caused a problem. Haig went directly to the rostrum. Until that moment he had been intensely focused on the crisis and had been steady, although testy and combative. Now I could see his knuckles turn white as he grasped the lectern; his arms shook and his knees began to wobble. I moved closer, thinking he might lose his balance or fall. Fortunately, the lectern shielded these involuntary body movements. Haig began his now famous presentation by describing actions we had taken in the Situation Room, adding mistakenly that "absolutely no alert measures ... are necessary at this time or contemplated."

PRESS REPRESENTATIVE: Who is making the decisions for the government right now? Who is making the decisions?

HAIG: Constitutionally, gentlemen, you have the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State, in that order, and should the President decide he wants to transfer the helm to the Vice President, he will do so. As of now, I am in control here, in the White House, pending the return of the Vice President and in close touch with him. If something came up, I would check with him, of course.

Personal footnote: In his book Caveat (1984) Haig created a scenario in which I provided the rationale for his lunge to the press-room lectern: "This was no fault of Speakes's. He had not been part of our group. He had no current information. 'This is very bad,' Allen said. 'We have to do something.' 'We've got to get him off,' I said. Allen agreed. It was essential to reassure the country and the world that we had an effective government." The tapes reveal no such exchange. As noted, I was not in the conference area, where Speakes's briefing could be heard, and as we arrived in the press room, I still did not know precisely what Speakes had said to cause Haig's alarm.

"YOU'D BETTER READ THE CONSTITUTION"

Back in the Situation Room there were only whispered side conversations until Regan spoke to the group at the table. The conversation took on a sharp and combative tone as the impact of Haig's impromptu press conference began to sink in.

REGAN: Preliminary investigation by the FBI and the Secret Service, no plot, no reason why the suspect shouldn't be in the area. They're conducting a background investigation in Lubbock, Texas. He stayed at the Park Central Hotel here, which is one block from the Executive Office Building.

WEINBERGER: We have the SAC bases ... we have the crews who are normally on alert twenty-four hours a day move from the base to their planes. The nearest submarine is [*redacted*] minutes, forty-seven seconds off, which is about two minutes closer than normal.

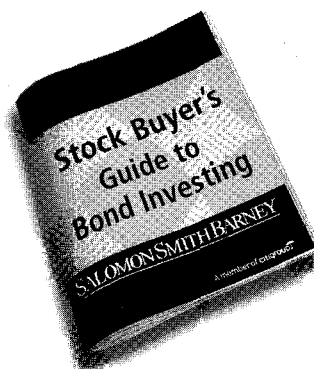
ALLEN: Nearest Soviet sub. Al, are you listening? [*Re-*

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dacted] minutes, forty-seven seconds—the nearest Soviet sub.

WEINBERGER: Yeah. Not enough to worry about. They're in and out there all the time, but it is a close approach. And the bomber crews of the Strategic Air Command, they are always on the alert, certain numbers, and those that are on alert now are moving from alert in their quarters and on the post to their planes. Simply stated, that's all ...

HAIG: That's based on the Soviet situation and not on anything here?

WEINBERGER: Well, that's based on the idea that until we know a little bit more about it, it is better to be in the plane which saves three and a half to four minutes than it is to stay in their quarters.

HAIG: I said up there, Cap ... I'm not a liar. I said there had been no increased alert.

WEINBERGER: Well, I didn't know you were going up, Al. I think if ...

HAIG: I had to, because we had the question already started and we were going to be in a big flap.

WEINBERGER: Well, I think we could have done a little better if we had concerted on a specific statement to be handed out. When you're up there with questions, why then it's not anything you can control, and ...

HAIG: Well, we had just discussed that here at the table, and we said we were not going to increase alert.

WEINBERGER: It may not be increasing the alert from a technical point of view, but once you get the additional information which I got about the one sub being closer than they've been before, then it seemed prudent to me to save three or four minutes.

HAIG: Yeah, but I think we could have discussed it.

WEINBERGER: Yeah, well, you were not here. I didn't know that you were going to make any statement, and I don't think it was a good idea to make a statement when you are with a question period. I think the best thing ...

HAIG: Well, you have the right to say that when we discuss it, and we did talk about it and everyone agreed there wouldn't be an increased alert.

WEINBERGER: I didn't know you were going up. I didn't have the information about the sub at that time. The stuff is coming in every three or four minutes.

HAIG: Well, you're not telling me we're on increased alert.

WEINBERGER: We have changed the condition to the extent I indicated.

HAIG: Is that a Defcon increase?

WEINBERGER: No, I don't think it is formally classified as such.

ALLEN: It's a change of degree, is it not? It's a change ...

WEINBERGER: It's an increased degree of alertness, yes.

ALLEN: Within Defcon Five, I presume.

WEINBERGER: Yes.

After a discussion of how to brief Vice President Bush when he arrived, the talk returned to national security and whether to

deploy the National Emergency Airborne Command Post (NEACP), a specially equipped Boeing 747.

HAIG: Let me ask you a question, Cap. Is this submarine approach, is that what's doing this, or is it the fact that the President's under surgery?

WEINBERGER: What's doing what, Al?

HAIG: That we are discussing whether or not to put the NEACP bird up in the air.

WEINBERGER: Well, I'm discussing it from the point of view that at the moment, until the Vice President actually arrives here, the command authority is what I have ... and I have to make sure that it is essential that we do everything that seems proper.

HAIG: You'd better read the Constitution.

WEINBERGER: What?

HAIG (*laughing*): You'd better read the Constitution. We can get the Vice President any time we want.

WEINBERGER: Well, one way or another, the initial steps, because he's not in a position there to take all of them without consultation, one way or another we ought to prepare at least enough so that we can move more rapidly than we could otherwise.

HAIG: Is it because of the submarine or because of the incident, that's the question I'm asking.

WEINBERGER: The reason that I asked to have them move to the planes is because of the incident, and I would continue to take that position until I know absolutely definitely that it's an isolated incident, which I think it is. But I don't know that yet, and I don't want to take any kinds of risk. The risk of some newspaper story or some rumor is a hell of a lot less than not having things in place.

As the afternoon wore on, questions about Haig's press-room performance continued to be raised. At one point an annoyed Haig can be heard on the phone in the background saying, "Not succession ... absolutely right ... Tell them to straighten it out—call them in and explain it ... Of course. My God, I know the pecking order, come on!"

Vice President Bush landed at Andrews Air Force Base at 6:30 P.M. and arrived at the White House a half hour later. He was briefed extensively. Decisions were made about the following day's schedule, and Bush prepared remarks for a press briefing. The President's condition was stable, and it was clear that he would make a full recovery.

It is important to point out that, despite brief flare-ups and distractions, the crisis-management team in the Situation Room worked together well. The congressional leadership was kept informed, and governments around the world were notified and reassured. Meese and Baker, at the hospital, where the helm really was, performed calmly and skillfully. The next morning, as the Vice President and the Cabinet assembled for the post-crisis briefing, Haig leaned over to me and said in a low voice, "Have you got your maniacs under control? They don't look too sharp this morning." ▀

THE GENETIC ARCHAEOLOGY OF RACE

DNA analysis is explaining where "racial difference" comes from—and what it does and doesn't mean. The study of human genetic variation has become the most contentious area in modern science

BY STEVE OLSON

.....

Over the past decade or so genetics researchers have been undermining the widespread belief that groups of people differ genetically in character, temperament, or intelligence. They have shown that all human beings are incredibly similar genetically—much more so than other species of large mammals. They have revealed the folly of attributing group behavioral differences to biology rather than culture.

But that's not how many of the news stories have read. On the contrary, here are the kinds of headlines you might have seen: "RESEARCHERS FIND GENETIC MARKER UNIQUE TO AFRICANS." "ASIANS BIOLOGICALLY LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO ALCOHOLISM." "ALL NATIVE AMERICANS DESCENDED FROM A SMALL NUMBER OF FOUNDERS." In other words, given how journalists, pundits, and bigots have interpreted genetics research, people are probably more convinced than ever that group differences are significant.

We will continue to be inundated with DNA-sequence information—and with interpretations of that information—for many years to come. These genetic data have immense medical potential (though that potential will probably take much longer to realize than most people suspect). By studying the genetic differences among individuals, researchers will eventually find many DNA variants that contribute to health or disease.

But genetics research is also producing results of an entirely different kind. Differences in DNA sequences from person to person reflect the cumulative effects of human history. The patterns of genetic variation in the world today therefore carry a record of that history. They document the evolution of an African ape that began walking on two legs about four million years ago. They record the existence, sometime between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago, of a

small group of people who are the ancestors of every person alive today. They chronicle the origins of "races" and "ethnic groups" and describe how those groups have both blended and separated over time.

Most genetics researchers are well aware of the historical dimensions of their work. But because these considerations raise uncomfortable issues, particularly issues of race, they tend to be downplayed. The White House news conference held on June 26 of last year to celebrate the sequencing of the human genome was filled with stirring but vague homages to human unity. "The human genome is our shared inheritance," said Francis Collins, the head of the publicly funded Human Genome Project, at the National Institutes of Health. "Race has no genetic or scientific basis," said Craig Venter, whose company, Celera Genomics, has been sequencing and analyzing human DNA.

The reality is considerably more complex. Genetics research is demonstrating that the differences in appearance among groups are profoundly incidental, but these differences *do* have a genetic basis. And although it's true that all people have inherited the same genetic legacy, the genetic differences among groups have important implications for our understanding of history and for biomedical research. These complications in an otherwise reassuring story have thoroughly spooked the leaders of the public and private genome efforts. The NIH has been collecting information about genetic variants from different ethnic groups in the United States, but it has refused to link specific variants with ethnicity. Celera has been sequencing DNA from an Asian, a Hispanic, a Caucasian, and an African-American, but it, too, declines to say which DNA is which.

This strategy of avoiding the issue is almost sure to backfire. It seems to imply that geneticists have something

to hide. But the message emerging from laboratories around the world should be hailed, not muzzled. It is one of great hope and promise for our species.

One reason for the caution displayed by the genome sequencers is a largely overlooked drama that has been playing out on the fringes of the Human Genome Project for the past ten years. Unlike most scientific dramas, this one has a clear protagonist: Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza, a genial but sharp-tongued professor of genetics at Stanford University. Now seventy-nine, with thick silver hair and a perpetually inquisitive expression, Cavalli-Sforza combines the demeanor of a man accustomed to respect with a natural openness that has won him many friends. Born and educated in Italy, he went to Stanford University in 1971. There he quickly became a leader in the fledgling field of anthropological genetics, which draws in-



ferences about the past based on the patterns observed in human DNA. His former students are now scattered around the world, carrying on the work he began. Yet he still rides his bike to campus each morning to write, read, and analyze the latest results from the lab. "He'll work until he drops," an associate says. "He's curious about the science."

In 1991 Cavalli-Sforza and a group of colleagues proposed a comprehensive study of human genetic differences, which they called the Human Genome Diversity Project. The study would involve gathering cells from several thousand people around the world, "immortalizing" the cells by converting them into laboratory cell lines, and using the cells' DNA to reconstruct human evolution and history. For Cavalli-Sforza, the Human Genome Diversity Project was to be the culmination of a lifetime of work.

The proposal loosed a flood of controversy. Aboriginal groups in the United States, New Guinea, and other countries accused the HGDP of stealing their genes, destroying their culture, and even contributing to genocide. Academic critics claimed that the project could encourage racist thinking, by oversimplifying issues of great complexity.

"The idea of studying human genetic diversity is a good one," says one outspoken critic, Jonathan Marks, an anthropologist at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. "But the way that Cavalli-Sforza has conceptualized it has problems at all levels."

Cavalli-Sforza has been baffled by the reaction to his proposal. He has always believed that the HGDP will help to end racism, not inflame it. In the 1970s he participated in public debates with the Stanford physicist William Shockley to dispute Shockley's racist ideas. He has worked closely with various African groups and cares deeply about their well-being. He protests that his intentions have always been purely scientific.

For almost a decade Cavalli-Sforza has been trapped in the paradox at the heart of human genetics: The only way to understand how similar we are is to learn how we differ. Yet any study of human differences seems to play into the



DARRELL JOE GEORGIOU

hands of those who would accentuate those differences. Researchers might claim that the genetic differences they identify among groups have no biological significance. Yet simply by dividing human beings into categories—whether sub-Saharan Africans, Jews, Germans, or Australian aborigines—they reinforce the distinctions they would seek to minimize. How to resolve this dilemma is quickly becoming one of the most difficult problems facing the study of human genetics.

A THEORY OF MUTATION

More than 10,000 years ago, on the frigid, wind-swept plains of northeastern Siberia, a genetic accident occurred in a testicle of a particular man. As one of the man's sperm cells divided, the Y chromosome in the cell underwent a copying error. One of the chemical units making up his DNA changed from a molecule called cytosine to one called thymine. An elaborate biochemical proofreading apparatus is supposed to correct such copying errors, which geneticists call mutations. But there are so many individual chemical units, or nucleotides, in human

DNA—about 60 million in the Y chromosome, and about three billion in the other chromosomes in a human sperm or egg cell—that a few mutations inevitably creep in every time a cell divides.

Within the next couple of months the man impregnated a woman. The sperm cell that combined with her egg was the one with the mutated Y. The woman gave birth to a son, each of whose cells had the mutated Y he got from his father. The son was no different from the other men in his tribe (the mutation in his Y had no effect on his body), yet he was a pivotal figure in human genetic history.

At some point, according to one interpretation of events, the son of the man whose Y had mutated crossed what was then a broad plain leading from Asia to North America—presumably with a small band of others. Before him stretched a continent that was largely, or perhaps completely, devoid of human beings. This man had sons himself, and



his sons had sons. Over subsequent centuries his descendants spread down the length of North America, across the Isthmus of Panama, and into South America. All of them carried their forebear's distinctive Y chromosome, to which they added their own mutations. Today more than half of Native American males have this mutated Y chromosome.

Genetic reconstructions of historical events can always be interpreted in somewhat different ways, observes Peter Underhill, the geneticist in Cavalli-Sforza's lab who first detected this and many other variations in Y chromosomes. The mutation could have occurred in Siberia some generations before the migration along the Bering land bridge, or it could have occurred in North America. Nevertheless, we know that this man existed and that his Y chromosome differed from any previous Y chromosome in this way. His particular mutation could not have originated in more than one of the ancestors of today's Native Americans, and the mutation occurred in no other group in the world. Yet DNA is such a long and complex molecule that every act of human procreation produces at least some unique mutations. These mutations spill across the generations like an unusu-

ally shaped jaw or distinctively colored eyes. The result is an elaborate human genealogy, an intricately branching tree of genetic alterations.

When Cavalli-Sforza first became interested in genetics, the detailed mechanisms of human heredity were completely unknown. In 1938, at the age of sixteen, he had enrolled in medical school at the University of Pavia, in Italy, largely because of a fascination with microscopes. "It turned out to be a very lucky choice," he says. "Had I not gone to medical school, I would have been conscripted at the beginning of the war."

But when he graduated, in 1944, he found that he disliked the practice of medicine. So he took a part-time faculty position at the University of Parma and did research on bacterial genetics. He is still well known among geneticists for his contributions to the discovery that microbes have



sex—or at least can engage in the kind of genetic exchanges involved in human couplings.

In 1951 a chance remark by one of his students redirected his research toward human beings. "Throughout my life I've been very lucky in finding good students," he recalled recently, when I met with him in his office at the Stanford medical school. "This particular student was also a priest. He mentioned to me that there were some data he thought would be of interest for human genetics." For more than three centuries the Catholic Church had collected information on births, marriages, and deaths in many Italian parishes. It was the ideal data set, Cavalli-Sforza realized, for the study of a particularly contentious issue in twentieth-century genetics—the role of genetic drift in evolution.

Most descriptions of evolution emphasize natural selection, in which a beneficial mutation becomes more common over time because bearers of this mutation are more likely to survive and procreate. But if an organism just happens to have lots of descendants, its genetic variants will become more common whether they are selected for or not. That's what happened with the Siberian forefather of many Native

Americans. His Y chromosome did not have an advantage over any others—it simply prospered through the vagaries of genetic chance.

In the 1950s many geneticists believed that natural selection would almost always squelch genetic drift. The parish records gave Cavalli-Sforza a way to test the idea. They showed that most people in the mountain valleys high above Parma married within their own small villages. Genetic drift is more obvious in small, relatively insular populations, because an individual who happens to have lots of children can flood a population with his or her distinctive genetic variants. In contrast, on the plains around the university, for example, the genetic effects of any one person are reduced, because the population is larger and more mixed. There genetic drift should be less obvious.

One way to measure genetic drift is to look at the relative proportions of blood types within certain communities. So Cavalli-Sforza and a few assistants took needles and test tubes and fanned out over the countryside. With the help of parish priests they gathered blood samples, often in sacristies after Sunday mass. They found that the distribution of blood types varied much more from village to village in the mountains than in the valley, just as predicted by the theory of genetic drift.

His success led Cavalli-Sforza to consider the matter more broadly. If he could link genetics with mating and migrations among the people around Parma, why couldn't he do the same thing on a larger scale? In fact, he ought to be able to determine the genetic relationship between any two groups of people. A group should carry many of its predecessors' variants, just as children bear the genetic legacies of their parents. By detailing the genetic similarities and differences among groups, Cavalli-Sforza could trace humanity's spread across the planet.

More and more kinds of blood were being discovered in the 1950s. In 1961 Cavalli-Sforza decided that he had enough data to try his idea. He and a colleague analyzed published data on blood types in fifteen populations—three each from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and one each from Australia, New Guinea, and New Zealand—and produced a tree showing how the various groups were related.

The results looked reasonable. The Native Americans from Venezuela and Arizona were related to Eskimos and Koreans in the sample, squaring with a migration across what is now the Bering Strait. The Africans and Europeans were genetically close, reflecting their continents' relative proximity. But to find out more, Cavalli-Sforza needed new kinds of data.

DECODING HUMAN HISTORY

The best way to determine the genetic relationships among people is to compare the sequences of the nucleotides in their DNA. But in the early 1960s those sequences were inaccessible. Manipulating DNA in

the laboratory at that time was like playing the piano with a baseball bat—existing tools were far too awkward to examine individual nucleotides. Cavalli-Sforza therefore turned to the next best thing: the many thousands of proteins in the human body. The sequence of nucleotides in DNA dictates the sequence of the amino acids that constitute proteins, though the translation between the two is a convoluted process that partially obscures the underlying DNA sequence. Still, by studying proteins Cavalli-Sforza could learn at least a little about the DNA differences among people.

The result was a decades-long string of remarkable, though in some cases still hotly contested, discoveries. In the early 1970s, for example, Cavalli-Sforza and the archaeologist Albert Ammerman proposed a radical new hypothesis for the peopling of Europe. At that time most anthropologists believed that modern Europeans were descended largely from the continent's Stone Age inhabitants, who replaced the Neanderthal people starting about 40,000 years ago. By analyzing the genetic variation of modern Europeans, Cavalli-Sforza and Ammerman came to a different conclusion. They decided that Europeans are descended largely from populations of farmers who started migrating out of the Middle East 9,000 years ago. As the sons and daughters of farming families left their parents' farms and moved into new territory, they interbred with the existing hunter-gatherer populations, which produced gradients of genetic change radiating from the Middle East. Only in mountainous areas unattractive to farmers—the Pyrenees homelands of the Basques, for example—were the genes of the indigenous peoples comparatively intact.

Other historical events, too, appeared to have influenced the European gene pool. For example, a genetic trail leads from the area north of the Black and Caspian Seas into the rest of Europe. Cavalli-Sforza linked this trail to the spread of the descendants of nomadic warriors and herders who first domesticated the horse, about 4,000 B.C.

Similar traces of historical events showed up on every other continent. The genetic history of China is dominated by a split between northern and southern people, despite the official position that all ethnic Chinese are descended from common ancestors. Native American proteins point to three major waves of migration, suggesting connections among groups that had never considered themselves related. And wherever Cavalli-Sforza looked, the fragmentary protein evidence hinted at much-greater detail to come.

Cavalli-Sforza didn't know it when he moved to Stanford in 1971, but a series of experiments then going on at the university and elsewhere were about to transform anthropological genetics—and much of the rest of biology. The Stanford biochemist Stanley Cohen and the University of California at San Francisco biochemist Herbert Boyer were figuring out how to cut DNA in precise locations, combine DNA from different organisms, and grow the resulting hybrid DNA in bacteria. For the first time, human beings

could control DNA nucleotide by nucleotide. The age of genetic engineering had begun.

New tools followed rapidly, with names like fluorescent DNA sequencing and polymerase chain reaction. By the mid-1980s biologists had realized that they had the means to pursue a goal that would have been unthinkable just a decade earlier: with sufficient effort they could read the entire multibillion-nucleotide sequence of human DNA. In 1990 an international consortium of governments launched the Human Genome Project to determine the sequence. Spurred by competition from the private sector, the project is today more or less finished (some cleanup work is still needed to complete the sequence).

As far as Cavalli-Sforza was concerned, the Human Genome Project was a good idea but didn't go far enough. The DNA that was sequenced is a pastiche of chromosomal fragments from various unidentified donors, and the project has produced just a single generic sequence to represent all of humanity. To trace human history Cavalli-Sforza needed to know how DNA sequences vary among people from different

into human genetics for RAFT—the Rural Advancement Foundation International. A small organization based in Canada, RAFT had previously targeted corporations that removed indigenous plants from developing countries, repackaged their genetic material in hybrid seeds, and then offered the seeds to Third World farmers for exorbitant prices. Now it accused the HCDP of a similar form of “biopiracy.” The DNA of indigenous people would be mined for valuable information. Pharmaceutical companies would then use this information to make drugs far too expensive for Third World people to buy.

The actions of the U.S. government seemed to bear out RAFT's claims. Federal agencies had applied for patents on cell lines containing DNA from several Third World groups. The patent applications, which were all aimed at medical uses, had nothing to do with the HCDP, and the project repeatedly dissociated itself from them. But opponents eagerly conflated the uproar over the patents with what they called the “vampire project.”

Many Native Americans were especially critical of the

TEN THOUSAND GENERATIONS SEPARATE PEOPLE TODAY FROM THE GROUP OF AFRICANS WHO ARE OUR COMMON ANCESTORS—A BLINK OF AN EYE IN EVOLUTIONARY TERMS. DURING THAT TIME HUMAN GROUPS HAVE NOT DIFFERENTIATED IN ANY SUBSTANTIAL WAY.

parts of the world. He began to think about the best way to gather such data, and he traded ideas with friends and colleagues. The result was the Human Genome Diversity Project, which was proposed in 1991 and fleshed out over the next two years. According to the planning document for the project, the goal would be to collect DNA from several hundred distinct groups, including many indigenous groups. Immortalized in cell lines, this DNA would be used primarily to study human history, but it would also have more-practical applications. Medical researchers could use it to investigate the connections between genetics and disease. And according to the planning document, by demonstrating the nature of the genetic differences among people, research on genetic variation would “help to combat the widespread popular fear and ignorance of human genetics and will make a significant contribution to the elimination of racism.” Who could be opposed to that?

BIOETHICS AND BIOPIRACY

In 1993 an odd-looking document appeared on the desks of the Human Genome Diversity Project's organizers. Under the heading “RAFT Communiqué” it was titled “Patents, Indigenous Peoples, and Human Genetic Diversity.” An artful combination of analysis and innuendo, the document was unambiguous in its conclusion: “The Human Genome Diversity Project should immediately halt any collection efforts.”

The campaign against the HCDP marked the first foray

HCDP. “The benefits for Native people are elusive or non-existent, and the risks are tremendous,” says Debra Harry, a member of the Northern Paiute Nation and the director of an organization called the Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism. Native American creation stories say that Native Americans have always lived in the Americas, Harry observes, not that their ancestors migrated across the Bering land bridge sometime before the arrival of Europeans. Furthermore, many Native American cultures hold that biological materials are sacred. “DNA is not ours to manipulate, alter, own, or sell,” Harry says. “It was passed on from our ancestors and should be passed on to our children and future generations with its full integrity.”

Native Americans and many other groups were also quick to raise the specter of biological warfare. What would stop a government from developing lethal microbes tailored to particular groups? This criticism especially galls geneticists, who say that it is too far-fetched to take seriously. Even if it were possible someday to devise a genetically based weapon, it would simply kill varying percentages of the people in different groups.

The tendency of critics to mix fact and fancy led to dark mutterings among the project's organizers. “These groups have to support themselves somehow,” Cavalli-Sforza says, “and they've decided to use us.” But the critics were much more skilled than the geneticists at ad hominem attacks. “Nice, smart, liberal—but naive and a bit arrogant—white guys firmly ensconced at reputable universities” is how a

RAFI organizer once described Cavalli-Sforza and his colleagues to me.

Cavalli-Sforza quickly proved to be a liability as spokesman for the project. He is not one to weigh the effect of his words before speaking. With European frankness he simply says what he thinks. "He's never been very politically astute," one colleague says. "Sometimes we can't help cringing, because we know [what he says is] going to come out condescending or arrogant."

Realizing that his lifelong ambition was slipping from his grasp, in the fall of 1993 Cavalli-Sforza turned to a colleague to help represent the project: a Stanford law professor named Hank Greely. With a background in bioethics, Greely spearheaded the creation of a "Model Ethical Protocol" to govern the collection and use of DNA samples. He also reminded geneticists of the sensitivity of their work. But the controversy was spiraling out of control. Dozens of organizations representing indigenous peoples were protesting the project. They decried spending millions of dollars to collect the blood of groups that were disappearing because of poverty, disease, and official neglect. Project organizers responded by suggesting that they could provide medical assistance to participating groups. Then a new objection

arose: indigenous peoples were being bribed for their DNA.

For Greely, the low point came in December of that year, when he traveled to Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, to represent the project at a meeting of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. Scheduled to speak twice at the meeting, Greely spent most of his second session listening to angry speeches from the audience. By the end of the conference he was standing at the podium being accused of being a CIA agent. "I had the opportunity to respond after each comment and almost always did so," he later recounted in a report about the meeting.

I noted that this was not a project about indigenous peoples, but about all the world's peoples ... I stressed that populations would not be involved in the project unless they wanted to be. I agreed that the West and western science had done terrible things to indigenous peoples, but said that science could also do some good things. I urged that our project was different—that we were trying to do things right.

His protestations were to no avail. "My statements were uniformly either ignored or dismissed as lies," he recalls. "The only faintly positive feedback from the crowd was that two speakers complimented me for my courage."

Opponents of the HGDP have succeeded in linking the project with existing qualms about genetic testing. Say that a group has an unusually high frequency of a genetic variant associated with a disease. Would every member of that group be stigmatized, whether or not he or she had the variant? Or what if genetic studies conflict with a group's belief about its origins?

The traditional way of dealing with such qualms has been through informed consent. People must be fully informed about what a test can reveal and must be given the choice of whether or not to be tested. But the HGDP adds a twist to the idea of consent. Studies of genetic variation usually focus on groups—Han Chinese, New Guinea highlanders, Hopis—rather than on individuals (in fact, individual DNA donors are usually anonymous). By the logic of informed consent, groups ought to have some say over whether their members participate in the research. Some bioethicists argue strongly against this position, saying that it denies individual autonomy, but the committee set up to oversee the HGDP in North America agrees with it. Before the project collects any DNA in North America, the groups being studied must understand and okay their involvement. It's not always obvious who speaks for a group, Greely admits, but when a representative body can be identified, it should be consulted.

Of course, giving groups the right to consent means that some will decline. "That's fine," Greely says. "We're under no illusion that we're going to get samples of every human population. Our goal is to get just five percent—so nineteen of twenty could not participate."

LUCKY

One sweet pound of filet mignon
sizzles on the roadside. Let's say a hundred yards below
the buzzard. The buzzard
sees no cars or other buzzards
between the mountain range due north
and the horizon to the south
and across the desert west and east
no other creature's nose leads him to this feast.
The buzzard's eyes are built for this: he can see the
filet's raw
and he likes the sprig
of parsley in this brown and dusty place.
No abdomens to open here before he eats.
No tearing, slashing with his beak,
no offal-wading
to pick and rip the softest parts.
He does not need to threaten or screech
to keep the other buzzards from his meat.
He circles slowly down,
not a flap, not a shiver in his wide wings,
and lands before his dinner, an especially lucky buzzard,
who bends his neck to pray, then eats.

—THOMAS LUX



SINCE **BV** 1900

1900
 WE'VE SURVIVED PROHIBITION, THE DEPRESSION, AND TWO WORLD WARS.
 YES, OUR WINES HAVE CHARACTER.

2000

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HOW DIFFERENT ARE WE?

RAFT's efforts to derail the Human Genome Diversity Project can be seen as a noble attempt to protect the powerless. They can also be seen as tragically misguided. If activists succeed in fomenting widespread distrust of genetics research, they could ruin an opportunity to discredit the essential notion underlying racism—that human groups have innate and fundamental biological differences.

This idea has deep roots. In 1758 the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus gave the human species its formal name, *Homo sapiens*. He also divided the species into subcategories: red Americans, yellow Asians, black Africans, and white Europeans. He described *Homo sapiens americanus* as “ill-tempered, ... obstinate, contented, free.” *Homo sapiens asiaticus* was “severe, haughty, desirous.” *Homo sapiens afer* was “crafty, slow, foolish.” And *Homo sapiens europaeus* was—of course—“active, very smart, inventive.”

Similar prejudices characterized biological thinking well into the twentieth century. From 1910 to 1930 most of the leading human geneticists in the United States actively supported the campaigns of eugenicists to limit reproduction by those deemed biologically inferior, including Eastern Europeans, Jews, and people with mental disabilities. This line of thinking led directly to the gas chambers of Nazi Germany, which effectively ended the eugenics movement. Yet the basic tenet of eugenic thinking—that the mental attributes of human groups differ for genetic reasons—remains firmly embedded in the popular imagination.

Until very recently most geneticists professed agnosticism on this issue. They said that not enough was known to assess the contributions of genetics to behavioral differences among groups. The data collected by Cavalli-Sforza and other population geneticists have been making that position less and less tenable. People are too closely related—and have mixed too much throughout history—to differ in fundamental ways.

Interpretations of this research have been controversial in the past, but the genetic evidence is now overwhelming. It clearly indicates that sometime in the period 100,000 to 200,000 years ago our ancestors went through a severe genetic bottleneck. Perhaps an environmental change drove ancient people to the brink of extinction. A more likely scenario, however, is that a relatively small group, numbering fewer than 20,000 at times and probably living in eastern Africa, was isolated for many thousands of years from the many groups of archaic human beings scattered throughout Africa, Europe, and Asia. The people who emerged from this genetic bottleneck had traits never before seen in human beings. They had lighter builds, new ways of interacting among themselves, and perhaps a greater facility with language. Eventually the descendants of these people spread throughout Africa and beyond. They reached Australia at least 60,000 years ago, probably traveling from the

Horn of Africa and then along the South Asia shoreline. They arrived in the Middle East a bit more than 40,000 years ago. By 35,000 years ago anatomically modern people had spread into Europe from the Middle East and into East Asia from Southeast Asia. Sometime more than 12,000 years ago they entered the Americas.

Whenever modern human beings came in contact with their archaic counterparts, the latter eventually disappeared. Many questions surround this process. The genetic evidence indicates that modern people bred very little with the archaic people living throughout the Old World. According to Joanna Mountain, a Stanford anthropologist who has been studying the genetics of African groups since the 1980s, when the Peace Corps took her to Kenya, “If the ancestral modern human population fifty thousand years ago had been highly diverse genetically, as it would have been if there had been a lot of mating with archaic peoples, we would still see evidence of that diversity today, but we don’t.” One possibility is that modern and archaic human beings did mate, but were so different genetically that such matings were infertile. Or maybe some matings between archaic and modern human beings did produce offspring, but at such a low rate that the archaic genes have been diluted out of existence.

How modern human beings replaced their predecessors also remains a mystery. Archaeological evidence indicates that bands of modern and archaic people sometimes lived near each other for thousands of years. Yet no remnants of warfare have been found. The cave paintings of Europe, some of which date from the period when modern people were replacing Neanderthals, evince plenty of violence against animals but not against other people.

Fewer than 10,000 generations separate everyone alive today from the small group of Africans who are our common ancestors. That’s much more than the twenty or so generations mentioned in Genesis, but it’s the blink of an eye in evolutionary terms. Even over thousands of generations human groups have not differentiated in any substantial way. Rather, the genetic evidence indicates that modern human beings have expanded as a single, relatively well mixed population without subsequent genetic bottlenecks (bottlenecks tend to erase the evidence of previous bottlenecks, which is how geneticists know that the bottleneck in Africa was the most recent one). Our comparative youth as a species accounts for our extreme genetic homogeneity. The chimpanzees living on a single hillside in Africa have twice as much variety in their DNA as do the six billion people scattered across the globe.

There’s another reason for our biological homogeneity. Modern human beings have never been able to resist for long what Noël Coward called “the urge to merge.” A person traveling due east from Madrid to Beijing (both at about 40°N latitude) would pass Italians, Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Uighurs, Mongolians,

and Han Chinese, among others. All these groups resemble their immediate neighbors more than they do groups farther away because of the continual exchange of mates across group boundaries.

There's a simple way of describing our genetic relatedness. Not only do all people have the same set of genes, but all groups of people also share the major variants of those genes. Geneticists have never found a genetic marker that is of one type in all the members of one large group and of a different type in all the members of another large group. That's why ethnically targeted biological weapons would never work. Every group overlaps genetically with every other.

The extreme interpretation of this observation, now popular in academia, is that biological groups do not exist. That's obviously absurd. The ways in which typical Nigerians, Koreans, and Norwegians differ physically belie any claim that all human groups are somehow "socially constructed." But the development of morphological differences in a widely distributed species is a biological

fact because of where they live, including dark skin to protect against the rays of the sun.

Biologists have several options in describing the variation they observe in people. They can label an individual purely in geographic terms, based, for instance, on the distance he or she lives from the Equator. Or they can sort people entirely in terms of the genetic differences they find. Instead they tend to use the labels generated by our highly fractious culture, even though many of these labels have little to do with the underlying genetics. In this way biologists endow those differences with much more weight than they deserve.

FROM SKIN COLOR TO INTELLIGENCE

People convinced that human groups differ for genetic reasons in intelligence, aggressiveness, or other complex behaviors have one last recourse. They can assume that the same forces leading to differences in appearance could somehow have influenced mental attributes. Maybe, for example, cold climates exerted some sort of

IF ACTIVISTS SUCCEED IN FOMENTING WIDESPREAD DISTRUST OF GENETICS RESEARCH, THEY COULD RUIN AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCREDIT THE ESSENTIAL NOTION UNDERLYING RACISM—THAT HUMAN GROUPS HAVE INNATE BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES.

commonplace. Whenever the members of a group are more likely to mate inside the group than outside, the frequency of particular genetic markers within that group can become higher or lower. In most cases these changes are entirely random, as with the blood-type distributions that Cavalli-Sforza studied in Italian villages. But natural selection can also be a factor. To take the classic example, as modern human beings moved from equatorial regions into more-northern latitudes, dark skin was no longer needed to protect the body from the sun's ultraviolet rays, and light skin made it possible for the body to produce more vitamin D. The resultant lightening of skin color seems to have occurred at least three times during human history: when Africans moved north into the Middle East and then into Europe; when dark-skinned people living on the islands and mainland of Southeast Asia migrated into what is today China; and when people from southern India moved north into the Punjab (genetics research is demonstrating that migrations of European people into the Subcontinent have had much less biological significance than is commonly assumed).

"What we see is the surface of the body, but the surface of the body is determined by climate," Cavalli-Sforza says. "Adaptations to climate have to be superficial, because those are the parts of the body that are exposed to the outside world." New Guinea highlanders and sub-Saharan Africans are about as different from each other genetically as any human beings on earth. Yet they have physical simi-

larities because of where they live, including dark skin to protect against the rays of the sun.

selective pressure on people moving north from the tropics, favoring individuals with greater initiative or intelligence. Or maybe some other genetic process divided cognitive traits unevenly among groups.

The argument doesn't work, for two reasons. First, no mechanism has been identified that could sort complex attributes within such a genetically homogenous species, causing the behavior of one group to differ from that of another. The idea that natural selection favored different cognitive traits on different continents—that selective forces on colder continents led to greater intelligence, for example—seems designed more to justify social prejudice than to establish testable hypotheses. After all, Neanderthals were much better adapted to the cold than modern human beings, yet they weren't able to compete with the newcomers from Africa and eventually became extinct.

Even if a potential differentiating mechanism could be identified, the case for group differences fails for a second reason. There is a fundamental difference between a simple trait such as skin color and a complex attribute such as intelligence. Skin color is determined by a handful of genes and does not depend on the experiences a child has in the womb and while being raised. The development of the brain involves thousands of genes and is indissolubly linked to experience. For this reason it is impossible to parse a particular complex trait into purely genetic and purely environmental components.

Of course, at some point genetic differences must override

the effects of experience. Human beings and chimpanzees differ in intelligence. If Neanderthals had survived, their behavior would probably be genetically different from ours. But the genetic differences among modern human beings are so small that group differences in behavior fall entirely within a range attributable to culture.

Take IQ tests as an example. In Japan the Buraku are a caste of people discriminated against in education, housing, and employment. Their children typically score ten to fifteen points below other Japanese children on IQ tests—about the average black-white difference in the United States. Yet when the Buraku emigrate to the United States, the IQ gap between them and other Japanese vanishes.

What if geneticists were to find a particular genetic variant that seems to be associated with a given behavior? Wouldn't that provide evidence for those who believe there are significant genetic differences among groups? In fact, just such an association is about to be made. Within the next few years geneticists will find the specific genetic variants that determine skin color. In the United States, because of the black-white gap on average IQ scores, these variants will be statistically correlated with our most commonly used measure of intelligence. But the genetic variants affecting skin color have nothing to do with the functioning of the brain. They exert their effects entirely through the influence of culture—by sorting people according to the color of their skin.

The complexity of the relationship between genes and behaviors will always confound simple-minded efforts to link the two. Even if a genetic variant seems to cause a particular behavior—such as extroversion or verbal fluency—in one environment, it may have no effect, or the opposite effect, in a different environment. The importance of a person's experiences makes it a fallacy to cite the frequency of certain genetic variants as the cause of group behaviors.

Our knowledge of history argues against any such association. Did the Vikings somehow lose a marauding gene in becoming the laid-back Scandinavians of today? Did the Arabs gain a religiosity gene with the coming of Mohammed? How could Hispanics have any kind of innate characteristics when the group consists of people with varying percentages of European, African, and Native American ancestry? Group attributes change with the alacrity of culture, not with the languor of genes.

There is no need to posit unknown genetic forces to explain the differences among groups. Individuals have unique experiences from the moment of conception. They receive varying levels of nutrition and medical care. They are treated differently every single day by adults, teachers, and peers. They are born into cultures with particular histories and beliefs.

Of course, human history could have worked out differently. Suppose that an archaic species of human beings such as *Homo erectus* had become firmly established in the Amer-

icas during a time of lower sea levels. As sea levels rose and the Bering land bridge became submerged, modern human beings might have ceded the hemisphere to their archaic predecessors and never left the Old World. In that case, when Columbus came ashore in the West Indies, he would not have encountered modern human beings separated from his own ancestors by just a few thousand generations. He would have met slope-browed, linguistically primitive people with a cranial capacity about two thirds of our own. Then we would have a race problem. Instead we have cultural differences masquerading as race problems.

We are highly visual creatures, which makes us very good at spotting differences among people. But researchers who study human fossils and our nonhuman ancestors have a different perspective. They point to the attributes that modern human beings share: our high foreheads, our nuanced languages, the light of intelligence in our eyes.

THE GENETIC INFORMATION AGE

Because of the controversy over the Human Genome Diversity Project, the federal government has so far granted the project relatively little funding. The large-scale effort envisioned by Cavalli-Sforza has not occurred. Paradoxically, the prospects for achieving the project's goals have never been better. Small-scale investigations of genetic variation are thriving. Researchers in other countries have been much more successful than have U.S. investigators at skirting issues of race and genetics. The Center for the Study of Human Polymorphism, based in Paris, now offers DNA samples from populations around the world for research. And the growth of the Internet is changing how genetics research is done. According to Mark Weiss, who oversees a gradually increasing budget for anthropological genetics at the National Science Foundation, the HGDP could go forward as a collection of networked efforts rather than as a single grand undertaking.

But the biggest boost to studies of genetic variation is coming not from anthropology but from medicine. When the project to sequence the human genome began, its organizers anticipated that having a single generic DNA sequence would satisfy most researchers. They have since recognized their short-sightedness. Much of the medical interest in the human genome lies not in the similarities among people but in the differences. If an individual is genetically susceptible to heart disease, cancer, or some other ailment, it is because of particular variants in that person's genes. To understand that susceptibility, researchers need to know about those variants.

Public and private organizations are now feverishly gathering data about human genetic variation. Essentially, they are looking for the same kind of variants involved in skin color and other simple genetic traits: discrete mutations in particular genes that have spread more or less widely in different groups. "Researchers will look at, say,

heart patients and controls, or African-Americans with high blood pressure and controls, to find the genetic variants related to those diseases and to find effective therapies,” says Lisa Brooks, the director of the Genetic Variation Program at the National Institutes of Health.

Not surprisingly, biomedical researchers are coming up against the same problem that has plagued the Human Genome Diversity Project. How can researchers describe genetic variances among groups without implying that groups are fundamentally different? So far the biomedical world has dealt with the problem largely by wishing it would go away. Investigators using data from the primary database on human genetic variation at the National Institutes of Health, for example, must sign a form saying that they will not try to determine the ethnicity of the people who contributed the DNA (though population geneticists could easily derive the ethnicity by comparing the samples with known sequences).

Maintaining a firewall between anthropology and biomedicine may be politically expedient, but it is intellectually dishonest. To understand the patterns of genetic variation in groups, researchers have to study the history of those groups. “The same evolutionary and historical factors that underlie genetic variation in general underlie the variations responsible for genetic diseases,” says Lynn Jorde, a human geneticist at the University of Utah. “The only question is whether we want to be efficient in studying those factors, and to me the answer is sure, why not?”

The privacy and rights of groups need to be protected in these studies, just as do the privacy and rights of individuals. Groups should be involved in the planning and conduct of research, and they need a negotiated measure of control over the uses made of genetic data. Geneticists and anthropologists are in a position to do great harm to groups through irresponsible and unethical actions (though many groups are threatened by societal forces much greater than those any scientists can unleash).

At the same time, groups run a risk by refusing to become involved in genetics research. Such research can have direct medical benefits if it involves diseases affecting the group, or indirect benefits if researchers provide participants with medical care. There can also be commercial dividends if a group retains control over its genetic materials. Besides, there’s more than one way to study the genetics of a population. If a group declines to be studied, geneticists can always find more-cooperative members who are outside the group’s control.

The rocky history of the Human Genome Diversity Project has demonstrated many of the pitfalls that need to be avoided. First, we have to keep in mind the extreme fluidity of human groups. The word “race,” for example, can’t begin to capture the commonalities and differences of our shared history. Most African-Americans have European ancestors. All European-Americans have African ancestors.

It makes no sense to talk about “races” when we are all complex mixtures of many different peoples.

We also have to remember just how small the genetic differences among groups are. The genetic variants affecting skin color and facial features are essentially meaningless—they probably involve a few hundred of the billions of nucleotides in a person’s DNA. Yet societies have built elaborate systems of privilege and control on these insignificant genetic differences.

Finally, as we learn more about our genetic susceptibilities to disease and our relationship to the past, we need to find better ways of putting genetics in context. People tend to attribute great importance to the findings of geneticists. But the striking homogeneity of our DNA actually emphasizes the centrality of the environment and our experiences in determining who we are. Because culture exerts such a profound influence on complex traits, our genetic heritage has little importance in considerations of ethics or public policy.

Cavalli-Sforza has always believed that if people understood genetics, they couldn’t possibly be racists. For that he must certainly be judged naive. Then again, geneticists think in terms of generations, and over that time scale even the staunchest opinions can change. In the 1950s only four percent of white Americans approved of marriages between members of different races. Today the number is close to 50 percent, and it is undoubtedly much higher among young people.

Changing attitudes and new social forces are already having an influence on the collective genome of our species. Barriers that in the past have limited intermarriage among groups are breaking down. Cavalli-Sforza believes that many societies are moving toward what he calls the American model. “Two hundred years from now,” he says, “people all over the world will be mixing in the same way that people in the United States are today.”

A greater rate of intermarriage will generate great cultural upheavals. Genetically it will matter not a whit. Human beings are so similar that it makes no difference biologically for a white to marry a black, or for an Asian to marry an Australian. More intermarriage will make it harder to figure out an individual’s ancestry. But it can only hasten the approach of a color-blind society.

Today most people still bear some traces of group biological history in their faces and skin. Perhaps someday our species will lose those distinguishing characteristics, through either intermarriage or genetic engineering. Until then the study of our genetic differences, if interpreted with care and understanding, could be one of the best ways to appreciate our biological unity. ▀

ON THE WEB: For a collection of links to related Web sites, including those of the Human Genome Diversity Project and its critics, see the online version of this article, at www.theatlantic.com/genetic.



THE KISS OF JUDAS

Among many, one panel:
Perhaps it catches the eye
Owing to its symmetry
Or its subject, betrayal.

Giotto is simple.
What does "simple" mean?
Soldiers, torches, a friendship,
Money, a kiss.

Two profiles: One looks upward,
Lips protrude with intention,
Brow slightly frowns.
And one receptive, brunette,

Eyes almost Byzantine,
Grave if not solemn,
His neck remains bare
To show absence of fear.

Judas wears a cloak
To reveal that he's hidden.
His embrace also hides
The other man's body.

Could Judas wish to become
Joined with his Lord's body?
Giotto has painted him
Like almost everyone else

In the Scrovegni Chapel,
Slightly rounded, short,
Not too far from being
A dog or a bird.

Isn't it hard, though, to leave?
Pope Leo liked them. We, too,
Those tender Giotto blues,
Those rose tints, those ash greens.

We were never in a church
More comforting than this one.
Imagine if women's wombs
Had paintings like this one.

All of us would be born
Wise and good, then.

—ALICIA OSTRICKER

*Pictured above: detail from The Kiss of Judas, by Giotto di Bondone, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua, Italy
Photo courtesy of Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.*

THE GUN LOBBY

A short story

BY JIM SHEPARD

.....

My old friend Chick sells guns out of a hamper he keeps in his basement. He sells them at gun fairs and uses the money to buy more guns, which he sells at other gun fairs. "It's a living," he says.

I give him some mild grief about the hamper, and he puts up with it, like it's a little rain on a nice day. The hamper's got straw flowers on it and a little wicker clasp. He could have phased it out by now, certainly, and it hasn't been close to big enough since what he calls "the early years," but he keeps it in service. He says, "My reasons cluster in the what-do-you-care? category"—as in when you ask, that's what you're told. His attachment to the hamper feels to me like nostalgia. But Chick is a puzzle, and I may be wrong.

Chick says that a sentence about selling whatever you want to whomever you want is in the Bill of Rights but never gets talked about. He says that in our history books someone's reaching for a gun every paragraph and a half.

He gets no arguments from me. I grew up on all those snub-nosed pioneer kids sitting around on their little woven rugs, learning their long division with coal on the backs of shovels while they listened to stories about Daniel Boone's Old Bess, Bess Boone's Little Danny, Betsy Ross's Philadelphia derringer, or Carrie Nation's homemade zip gun. Sergeant York, from the hills of West Virginia, who could peg a squirrel's retina at 9,000 yards. Slow Tick Billy, last to draw but first to let fly once things were unholstered. As kids we just knew that everybody, tiny tots to tall Texans, sat around dreaming about potting the next Mohawk to cut through the back garden.

As far as Chick is concerned, guns pay for braces, trips, and, pretty soon, colleges. He has two big girls, Amanda and Astra, and two little boys, Emmett and Jasper. Before bed the girls kneel side by side and pass along to God prayers for Mommy and Daddy and their brothers and the gun lobby.

Chick sells Colts, Walthers, Glocks, Uzis, and Ingrams. He services the Colts and Ingrams himself, with one hand on the manual. He dabbles in Kalashnikovs. His big score was a Schmeiser with the original firing pin, which he turned around in two days for triple his money. He's had

poison-tipped darts from the Amazon and a box of curved rubber truncheons said to be favored by the Albanian police. He has squirreled away in his little root-cellar sub-basement some high-end contraband laser sights, a crate of phased-out NATO flash grenades (with the rounder bodies, before they went to the narrow design), and a drop-tank from an F-18. In the sub-sub-basement, in a beer cooler, he has stashed an old scorched liquid-nitrogen canister wrapped in gummy and tenacious biohazard tape. The kids call the sub-sub-basement "Daddy's secret secret room." He's mum on what's inside the canister, which is part of the mystery of Chick.

He also stockpiled some Claymores for a buddy who wanted to move them upstate. He gave the buddy thirty-six hours to pick them up. They had to be primed and set to blow, but even so, you don't want the kids poking around the anti-personnel mines. He kept everything locked up tight, but still, how many parents have said that before?

He sold my wife everything she wanted when, without fully consulting me, she stopped by his basement. She went the better-safe-than-sorry route when it came to quantity. He sold her a Glock, an Uzi, an Ingram M-10, and a nifty little Travis Bickle .25 caliber on a sliding brace arrangement that fits around the forearm and allows the wearer to squeeze off a clip even after extensive arm trauma. The package looked like overkill to me, and now he admits that he may have gone, as he puts it, a gun too far. Stephanie paid in cash (Chick doesn't take Visa), and I have to assume that the total was a stiff piece of change, especially with holsters and ammo thrown in.

Stephanie kept her family name when she married me, so our mailbox says HOME OF ROGER CHANUTE AND STEPHANIE VON WATZDORF. I tell her I'm sorry she's never been happy here, and she tells me she's always thought the place was fine; it's me she's never been happy with.

"Here" is Waterbury, Connecticut, which right now is the main show in terms of the cutaway news, because of the standoff. You can see Stephanie or me, the hostage, at a window every so often on TV. We watch ourselves.

The house is always on. My rake is still in the leaves in the front yard. You can see frost on the ground.

Stephanie has turned off the heat (to get serious, she says), so she's usually in her outgrown Brearley blazer. In the mornings we can see our breath. I asked about the heat the first morning, but I'm not going to press it. She goes around the house with a semi-automatic in each hand. She's originally from Manhattan.

"They're lining me up right now," she cackled yesterday when she passed a window. "Some SWAT guy's shouting into his radio, 'I could take her now!'"

I reminded her of all the hostage movies we've seen that have turned out badly. *Dog Day Afternoon*. I ran out of titles. "*Rebel Without a Cause*," I added.

"They weren't hostages," Stephanie said contemptuously.

"He was waving a gun around," I told her.

She was sitting at the kitchen table flipping a quarter in one hand, like George Raft.

"My point is, it was a tragedy that could easily have been averted," I murmured.

"You're a pig," she said. "You respect nothing. You have the integrity of a grease trap."

I asked her whatever happened to divorce in such situations. Flak-jacketed sharpshooters for the state were peeking out here and there around the cop cars and TV vans. She gave me a look to let me know that the whole standoff could have come to an end right then.

I'm not going to provide a whole Ring trilogy of what she has been mad about. I will say that she's right in contending that I'm not much good when it comes to empathy, my share of the day-to-day work, sobriety, monogamy, fiscal responsibility, or periodontal hygiene. We've had two trial separations, and she got skinned both times on support. She had her Manhattan lawyers, but they had to deal with good old-fashioned Waterbury judges. She didn't need the money, but, you know. It's humiliating.

Chick has been the only one allowed in to negotiate, maybe because he sold her the guns. Maybe because he's a mystery. She won't talk to the police directly, even on the phone. They drove Mel and Lucille, her father and mother, all the way up from the East Side, and she still wouldn't come to the line. Lucille's way of easing into the situation was to open with "Stephanie, *pick up that phone*." This over the bullhorn. I could've told her how that was going to go over.

Every so often I ask Stephanie what she thinks she's going to get out of this situation. I can tell it's not the right question to ask.

Negotiations have been on hold since one of the troopers took a round in the shoulder while passing out coffee. "What was *that* all about?" I asked her after I ran into the room. She didn't answer.

When Chick came, he came unarmed, which was lucky for him. You'd think she had been frisking people with the

business end of an Ingram her whole life. He gave the pantry a glance to see how our food was holding out. Between calls from the police he talked to us about how the neighborhood was taking it.

When he got the chance, he gave me a look as if to say, Sorry, buddy. I gave him back the I'm-looking-through-you thing. I call it "The Stephanie."

For those who think that Chick would be a different man if he'd had some personal experience of what can happen when handguns proliferate, let me report that his uncle in Florida was shot four times in the head with a Saturday-night special in a disagreement over a game of gin rummy. Apparently it was the fourth shot that killed him. The guy who shot him was a real mutt. The guy had bought the gun that day, drunk, at a gun fair in Orlando. After his purchase he threw up in the aisle and got thrown out of the mall. A simple background check would have saved the uncle's life. Chick says a saliva test would have weeded the guy out. And has that changed his mind about guns? "Hey, I didn't stop eating ham sandwiches after Mama Cass choked to death," he says.

Nobody has even tried to negotiate with us for the past day and a half. We've been pretty much staying in the kitchen. Every so often I toast a little something in the oven with the door open, to warm up.

Stephanie has been keeping to herself, across the room. After Chick's last visit she Magic Markered an orange-and-white target and cut it out and pinned it to her Agnes B. blouse. She hung the blouse in the front window. It's a weird effect on TV.

In my opinion, the gun lobby is not pernicious or evil or embattled or heroic; it just *is*. It's like the Samaritan gorge, or German efficiency, or beans in the soup, or the death of the sun. What does it mean to "stand up" to the gun lobby? How do you solve a problem like Maria? How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?

There are all sorts of things about this country I never liked, and I'm a guy who believes in making a difference. My way of doing that is by not taking part in any political activity whatsoever. While we were courting, Stephanie used to say that it was all of a piece: when we had a problem, if she brought it up, we talked about it, at least for a few minutes, and if she didn't, we didn't. I'm a big sins-of-omission kind of guy, apparently. I just go through life not doing anything to anyone, wreaking havoc left and right.

"Here are my options with you," Stephanie would say, lying in bed next to me, her eyes wet. "Either my lifemate-soulmate-husband is too stupid and self-involved to know what he's doing to me, which isn't good news, or he *does* know and he's being disingenuous about it, which is even worse news."

Then, of course, I'd catch grief for not having any come-

back. And what, exactly, is an acceptable comeback to that?

The truth is, in most of my regrettable recent moves it's like I'm throwing a sheet over a sawhorse: I'm just trying to give some shape to all the disappointment.

I've been a problem baby, a lousy son, a distant brother, an off-putting neighbor, a poor student, a worrisome seat-mate, an unreliable employee, a bewildering lover, a frustrating confidant, and a crappy husband. Among the things I do pretty well at this point I'd have to list darts, reclosing stay-fresh boxes, and keeping out of the way.

Stephanie has been pretty hemmed in for the past few years, between me ("The Lump"); her mother, whom she calls "Ilsa Koch without the charm"; and this whole cervical problem that has allowed us to go to meeting after meeting and watch doctors scratch their heads. Doctors find Stephanie's condition an interesting puzzle, something meaty to mull over. We see a lot of pursing of lips and nodding while we recite our tale of woe, and then we're told what it isn't, and then we all decide to wait and see how things develop, and then on the way out one of us pays what the insurance doesn't cover. They don't say whether we can have kids, but they do make it clear that I should have been doing more handwringing about it. Instead of screwing around with one of the checkout girls at an auto-parts store.

Add to that Roger's old friend Chick, handling the entrepreneurial training and emotional counseling. He and Stephanie hit it off, in a cobra-mongoose sort of way, right from the beginning. I used to think they competed to see who could put up with more from me.

"You see that look?" he said to me, right in front of her, after he first met her. "That's the 'Now I see where my husband gets it from' look."

"Does he seem like a bad influence?" I asked Stephanie after he left.

"In every way possible," she said.

For years Chick has been disappointed in my politics, my education, my general deportment, and my overall lack of curiosity about the way things work. He has always seen the residue of potential, however.

The past few years we've been like the Collier brothers. I was over there most nights, nine to one. His wife went to bed at nine. He counseled me against involvement with Stephanie, though the advice came a little late in the day. Nevertheless, he had dry-mounted and pinned to his worktable in the sub-sub-basement an infrared photo of her that

he'd taken with a night scope. It looked like a cross between a pinup and a black-light poster. I mentioned it to Stephanie. She didn't give me a lot of reaction. "The mystery of Chick," she would say to herself every so often when I was heading out the door.

A few months ago he dropped by to show off a set of Finnish Puukko knives and invited himself for dinner. Stephanie gave me a look, but I let it go by. So she said, "All righty, then," and stretched the fish by poaching it in a can of minestrone soup. Chick waded right in next to her. He started pitching spices into the saucepan and promised to get the dish up on its feet.

"Not that he'll notice," he said, indicating me.

"I could blindfold him and feed him an onion, he'd think it was an apple," Stephanie said.

They went on like that all through dinner. They commiserated about how my eyelids tended to droop when I was trying to concentrate.

"He lies all the time," Chick complained to her. "He tells you one thing and he's thinking another."

"Did you used to think he was kind?" she asked him. "I used to think he was kind. Or wanted to be kind. Or something."

"Sometimes I think he's a good man, and sometimes I'm not so sure," Chick told her.

"Exactly," she said. "Exactly."

I played with the knives and sat there. I told them I felt like a guy in a glass booth and they were two Israelis haggling over a verdict.

"That's perfect," Stephanie said. "The banality of evil."

"Oh, man," Chick said.

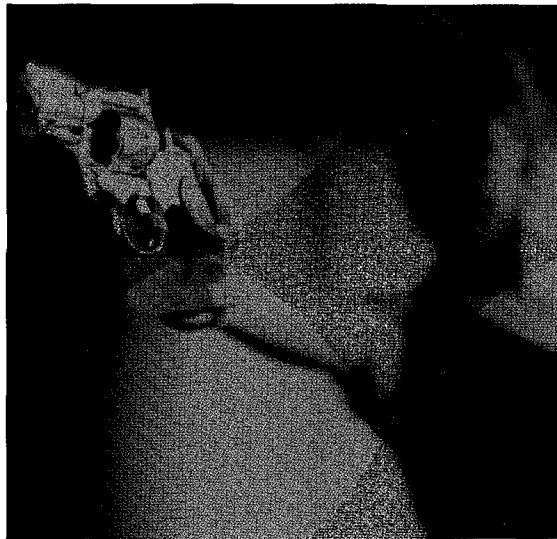
"You and Chick hit it off this evening," I told Stephanie later that night.

"When are you going to talk to me?" she asked. "Are you ever going to talk to me?"

"What are we doing right now?" I wanted to know. But that was it, end of discussion. She whacked her bedside-lamp switch and shut down for the night.

She called him once or twice that I knew about, and tried to talk to him about me. She even flirted with him once, a month or two after that dinner, when I was keeping to my bed. She went over there and hung out in the sub-sub-basement, with the wife asleep upstairs. She told me the next morning that she got a look at the canister. She still refers to the whole thing as her "low point."

For a while she drew lines on the inside of her arm with my Gillette. I didn't say anything. I broke it off with the auto-parts woman.



Like I said before, she's right. I have the integrity of a four-dollar tent.

Last night I gave it one last shot. I appealed to the Old Us. Remember when I used to listen? I asked. Remember when we respected me a little bit? Remember when there was something worth saving here? Meaning me. She just lay there, her palm spread over the Glock, her eyes wet.

Chick remembered. On the way out after his last negotiation attempt, he said to me, "Hang in there, buddy. Don't forget Orchard Street." He was talking about the morning in our junior year in high school when a woman sat down suddenly in the grass in front of us, and her grocery bag tipped over. He ran to call an ambulance while I sat with her. She was gray and sweaty and hung onto my shoulder and started telling me about how she had met her husband. How it was because he went back for his sweater, and how for a while she worried she didn't deserve to be so happy. Every so often whatever it was would grab her, and she'd clench my shirt in her hands. The ambulance went to Orchard Drive instead of Orchard Street, so it was twenty minutes getting there. I laid her down, and she kept my shirt in her hands. Chick stayed half a front yard away, watching. I had my hands on both sides of her head. When the ambulance finally came, they went about getting her ready to be loaded in; when they tried to separate my shirt from her fist and I saw her face, I said I'd ride with her. She nodded to them over and over again, and they figured I was family.

I sat with her the whole day and night. I called my parents to tell them where I was. Her husband never showed up. The nurses called, and then I called a few times. I found out her name was Anne Coulter. She had no kids. She was in a lot of pain and slept on and off. She told me again about her husband's sweater.

I told Stephanie about it on one of our dates. She especially liked the part about my going to see the bereaved husband afterward, and my asking to see the sweater. She touched my fingers on the tablecloth.

A little while later, before we got married, we were lying around in a bed-and-breakfast in Winsted one morning, and she started volunteering what she liked about me. I had a sense of humor, I handled instruction well, and I had a good heart. She mentioned the woman in the hospital, and the sweater.

I told Chick how much the story meant to her. That's also what he meant when he said, "Don't forget Orchard Street."

I fall asleep seeing him climb a balloon with Stephanie not far behind. Their faces are peaceful.

In the morning, when I come out of my doze, I'm alone.

I lie still, listening. The bedroom window's right there: all I have to do is climb out on the garage roof.

The whole house is quiet. It's quiet outside.

When I come downstairs, she's at the kitchen table, leafing through the little notebook she kept the first time we tried to get pregnant.

"I made tea," she says, like her heart's going to break.

We can tell that the sunlight's amazing even with the shades pulled. On the street things are stirring. The sound's off on the TV, but lots of vehicles are backing up and moving out. We've been breaking news for a full four and a half days, and the forces of order are probably getting antsy.

On the next channel the SkyView Eye on Connecticut shows a lot of activity in the rear echelons. Stephanie and I are quiet about it, just watching.

"I think this may be it," she says, like my corn muffin's ready. She throws the bolt on the Uzi.

From the helicopter view someone who looks like Chick is squatting near a hydrant. Guys fan out from dark-blue vans. Then the coverage switches to something suspiciously bland, a little stretch around our front door. You can see in the blurry foreground our mailbox, all shot to pieces when she hamstrung the mailman. The next channel's showing only talking heads.

Around us outside we can hear the thumping on the lawn of big, heavy guys trying to be catlike. The ground is covered with leaves, so the whole surprise thing is really out the window.

"Hey, Roger," Stephanie says: a nice hello.

Glass shatters, and there's a white, chest-thumping concussion of flash grenades and the sound of all three doors caving in, like four or five breakfronts being cannonaded. We're propelled out of our seats, spinning, moles in sunlight. The Ingram sounds like a portable jackhammer, and the Uzi like manic static.

I have a hold on Stephanie's ankle. For the longest time I'm not hurt. Her rate of fire is spectacular. The ordnance coming back at us sets everything in the kitchen into electric life. Our overhead fixture's doing a tarantella.

Sometimes events occur in which every second can be taken out of line, examined this way and that, and then allowed to move along. This is one of them. What I think are hits are shell casings cascading down on my head and shoulders. A flash grenade bumps and hisses and teeters on the floor by my cheek. Two guys are down in the hallway, and one seems to be napping on the sofa. A second concussion separates us, followed by the gift of resumed fire everywhere, and my foot and leg are grated and chopped. The house is a festival of small-arms fire. Stephanie's on her side, under the kitchen table. The .25 caliber has come down her forearm mount but isn't firing. The linoleum deforms and sprouts. This is my way of finding her, and her way of finding me. I have the time to think, and in that time I think that we failed not because of what we didn't have but because of what we wanted: one more look into those old hearts, the ones we turned our backs on, the ones we owed everything to. ▀

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

A REVOLUTIONARY ITINERARY

An Englishman tours historic battlefields in Massachusetts and New York

BY GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

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Most of the numerous war memorials in Concord, Massachusetts, are to the young men of the town who died while winning America's wars over the centuries, but one is to the losers. Standing at the North Bridge and dated April 19, 1775, it reads,

They came three thousand miles
and died
To keep the past upon its throne;
Unheard, beyond the ocean tide
Their English mother made her moan.

Like those English soldiers, my countrymen, I had to come 3,000 miles—but on a peaceful mission, to look around battle sites of the War of Independence. Some of these are found in particularly attractive corners of America, and they provide a nice connecting theme for a family holiday. But my visit also gave me an opportunity to ponder the complexities and ironies of history.

My journey began at Lexington and Concord, once a day's march from Boston, now half an hour's drive away. Around there an English tourist always has a home-away-from-home feeling. Despite the differences of topography, flora, and fauna, most vividly amid the garish russets and ochers of the famed New England fall (the time of my visit, last year), in Massachusetts I cannot quite feel I'm in a foreign country. Gloucester and Worcester, Plymouth and Weymouth, Leominster and Sunderland, Oxford and Cambridge: it isn't called New England for nothing. Lexington and Concord both have the recognizable tang of English villages, each with its village green, the Battle Green at Lexington dominated by its

Minuteman statue, the smaller Concord green framed by those memorials.

My purpose in making this visit was not to concoct a revisionist interpretation of the War of Independence, although the conflict was politically and morally confused, with right and wrong anything but clear-cut. Not least, there were plenty of Englishmen who warmly sympathized with the Colonial rebels, and plenty of American loyalists, or Tories, who wanted to remain true to their monarch in London—and who would have tried to, if he and his ministers hadn't pigheadedly made their position impossible.

The King of Great Britain, denounced in the Declaration of Independence for his "injuries and usurpations," was kindly in person (the affectionate portrait in Alan Bennett's *The Madness of King George* isn't a fantasy), and Lord North, his Prime Minister, was "an easy-going, obstinate man, with a quick wit." But they blew it, lacking what might nowadays be called strategic humility. The Coercive Acts were passed, to suppress incipient rebellion, and troops were sent across the Atlantic. Lord Chatham, of all people (Pitt the Elder, who had been his country's victorious war leader in the previous decade), demanded the repeal of the acts: "There is no time to be lost; every moment is big with dangers. Nay, while I am now speaking, the decisive blow may be struck."

So it was, not many weeks after he spoke. By April of 1775 Massachusetts was coming to the boil, with a popularly elected Congress, and a Committee of Safety preparing armed resistance. General Thomas Gage was governor

and the commander of the British army in North America, a likable man, married to an American woman, and with no hatred of the colonists. But when he learned that the committee was stockpiling munitions and food at Concord, he sent a detail there to seize the supplies. The story never palls in the telling: warning lights in the Old North Church of Boston, the rides of William Dawes and Paul Revere to rouse the people of Lexington and Concord, and then "the shot heard round the world."

First blood was shed at Lexington. When the Redcoats, under Major John Pitcairn, arrived in the morning, they found a band of Minutemen on the common. After some delay firing began, and soon eight colonists lay dead, as the British marched on to Concord. Today both places are sleepy and postcard-pretty, though full of alarmingly luxurious boutiques, antiques stores, and restaurants. The good people of Concord can dine on crab cakes with balsamic-vinegar sauce and other dishes unknown to the Pilgrim fathers, who got by also without Lexington's Whole Health Farmacy and the Center for Acupuncture.

Each town is admirably maintained. Apart from its visitors' center, the Lexington Historical Society keeps several Colonial-era houses impeccably tidy, though be warned if you have a problem with fancy dress: there's a lot of it about in these parts—tour guides dressed in periwigs and breeches, or long skirts. At moments during my tour I felt like the Hollywood producer who said he didn't want to see any more movies where they wrote with feathers. It was in Lexington that Revere stopped with his warning, before riding on toward Concord. A mile to the east of the green stands the Munroe Tavern, commandeered that April day by the British as headquarters and field hospital, while the barkeep himself,



Daniel Chester French's commemorative statue The Minute Man, at the North Bridge, in Concord, Massachusetts

William Munroe, was down the road serving in Captain John Parker's company. Those Minutemen had their own headquarters at the Buckman Tavern, where Parker's company met at dawn to await the British. The tavern was restored in the 1920s, but it preserves a door with a hole from a British musket round.

From Lexington to Concord is the five and a half miles of the Battle Road Trail. You pass the Minute Man Visitor Center (a pretty park) and the Hartwell Tavern (more "costumed interpreters") before reaching Concord, with its doubly explosive charge of American military and literary history. A cluster of houses holds memories of Emerson, Hawthorne, and the Alcott family, and Thoreau's Walden Pond is a few minutes away. Here is the distilled essence of that great Protestant culture of New England which dominated America for generations and is now barely a memory. My first night was spent at the excellent Colonial Inn, doubtless more comfortable today than when it was built, in 1716.

A few minutes' walk from the inn up Monument Street, past the fascinating Old Manse, a house built by Ralph Wal-

do Emerson's grandfather and once inhabited by Nathaniel Hawthorne, is a path on the left that leads to the North Bridge. The site is now innocuous enough, but the mind's eye can picture that April day. After their sharp but inconclusive little engagement in Lexington, the British marched here to face down the rebels, and marched into disaster. The firefight at the North Bridge has been compared to the "Black Hawk Down" debacle described in Mark Bowden's book of that name, when ninety-nine elite American soldiers were helicoptered into Mogadishu, in Somalia, in October of 1993, and brought out after eighteen of their number had been slaughtered.

What North Bridge showed was that sheer technical superiority isn't everything in warfare. Historians have been telling us lately that the fabled Minutemen weren't such hotshots after all. And it's true that the eighteenth-century musket, with its unrifled bore, was a highly inaccurate weapon; true, too, that the Massachusetts militiamen weren't trained soldiers at all. But then, neither were those Somali fighters, who made up for it with ferocity and sheer num-

bers. And so the British force, cut down by a hail of musket fire, pulled out of Concord and began a grim march to base, picked off by Minutemen firing from behind every hedge and hillock, until they reached Boston, less 274 men killed or wounded, to find that their troubles had only begun.

One other name synonymous with independence is now part of Boston. If you've been lunching in one of the good Italian restaurants of the North End, right behind *The Atlantic Monthly's* office, you can work off the effects of rigatoni and Valpolicella by walking briskly along North Washington Street, across the Charlestown Bridge, and up Breed's Hill, the actual site of most of the Battle of Bunker Hill and now a pleasant quarter covered in what an English estate agent would call "desires" (desirable residences). Finally, you can ascend the monumental obelisk that crowns the hill, all 294 steps of it, and, if you aren't panting too much, look down on what was once a battlefield and enjoy a glorious view of the city.

In 1775 the topography of the bay was quite different: three distinct peninsulas,



The Munroe Tavern, British headquarters during the Battle at Lexington Green

like stubby fingers, stuck out seaward. To the south was Dorchester Heights (one day to become part of Irish South Boston), where American artillery drove out the British in March of 1776 in another critical encounter of the New England campaign. The middle peninsula was Boston itself, almost an island, linked to the mainland by a narrow neck, with its road to the village of Roxbury. North of Boston was the third, small peninsula, between the Charles and Mystic Rivers. Here Breed's Hill looked down on Charlestown, at the end of the point, which the patriot militias had fortified.

In June of 1775 the Second Continental Congress was debating the next course of action, with Franklin, Jefferson, and Hancock among the debaters. They still held back from a formal declaration of independence, but they agreed to accept the Massachusetts militias as combatants, and appointed Colonel George Washington as commander in chief. Washington was preparing to arrive when he was brought the news of the Battle of Bunker Hill, on June 17. The lines of battle are arrayed in a diorama next to the obelisk. Technically it was a victory for the British, who attacked the patriot fortifications—but a Pyrrhic victory if ever there was: out of 2,200 British soldiers 1,034 were killed or wounded, including one in nine of all the officers the British lost in the whole war.

For a complete contrast to the gentle landscape of those New England battlefields, I traveled on to the Hudson River Valley. Nothing had prepared me for the gaunt beauty of Lake Champlain. Framed by the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains, the lake was, when I crossed it on a little ferry between the towns of Charlotte and Essex, covered with a shimmering veil of fall mist. Coming here brought home the enormous importance of this valley in the war, as a route from Canada to the sea and as a barrier dividing New England from the rest of the Colonies. A beautiful map hanging at Crown Point, one of the forts that dominate the upper Hudson, helped me to understand. Its text says that it was based on Lord Amherst's survey of 1762 and printed in London in August of 1776 at 53 Fleet Street (hard by a couple of bars where I used to dally, come to think of it). A little farther down the valley is the magnificently imposing Fort Ticonderoga, restored and well preserved for family outings. In the time between Concord and Bunker Hill it was captured by that somewhat dubious figure Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, who sent Ticonderoga's cannon to Massachusetts, further to tilt the military balance.

Fifty miles farther south is the haunting field of Saratoga. It was very

still and lonely when I found it, on the last stage of my pilgrimage, only bird-song and crickets disturbing the silence of the woodland and long grass, dotted with little memorials. Here it was that "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne retreated with his harassed army, which had seemed only weeks before to be scattering the rebels; here that on October 17, 1777, he surrendered, in what was not only the turning point of the war but also one of the most desperate defeats in British history.

Here I sat and thought about the struggle. The War of Independence was a heroic conflict, but what one made of it depended on who one was: English, American, French, Indian (the French and Indian War was just a decade past when the new war began), black slave. This point was in effect made at the time by the greatest of all English Tories, Samuel Johnson. There was no more bitter critic of the American rebels in the 1770s than Johnson, who deplored their disloyalty to their rightful King. But with his hatred of slavery and of the oppression of the weak by the strong, Johnson had more to say than that. He had already written, in 1759, what is I think the greatest of all anti-colonial essays. Johnson imagined an Indian chief watching an English army passing toward Quebec to fight the French, remembering the days when his people were masters of woods and lakes, before "a new race of men entered our country from the great ocean."

Those invaders ranged over the continent, slaughtering in their rage those that resisted, and those that submitted, in their mirth ... and when ... [they] have destroyed the natives, they supply their place by human beings of another colour, brought from some distant country to perish here under toil and torture ... They have a written law among them, of which they boast as derived from him who made the earth and sea ... Why is not this law communicated to us? It is concealed because it is violated. For how can they preach it to an Indian nation, when I am told that one of its first precepts forbids them to do to others what they would not that others should do to them.

That was written some sixteen years before the Declaration of Independence

listed among its grievances that the King had encouraged "the merciless Indian Savages." And it was Johnson also who saw the great canker at the heart of the American cause: "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" That isn't something you will find in more old-fashioned American accounts of the war, although the exhibits I visited were admirably fair-minded to all sides. It was gratifying to learn that Gage gave orders not to "plunder the inhabitants" and that Pitcairn stopped his troops from bayoneting Minutemen.

In Concord one of the memorials is to those who fell in "The War of the Late Rebellion"—a phrase that a Tory might have used for the War of Independence but that here means the Civil War. Two more are for the great world wars of the twentieth century, and one is for the Vietnam War, in which five Concord men died, one of them called Emerson. With almost any of these wars it is too easy to say that men on one side died "to keep the past upon its throne"—or that this is always the wrong thing to do. In his 1999 book *Five Days in London, May 1940*, which details the time when Winston Churchill had to decide whether to negotiate with Adolf Hitler or continue the war, John Lukacs contrasts Hitler, who was "not a traditionalist" but rather "the greatest revolutionary of the twentieth century," with Churchill, whose own great asset that epic spring was "the deep-seated conservatism of the British people," who were mutely determined not to yield to that horrible new tyranny. Wasn't "the past" the right side then?

Visiting these beautiful, poignant battlefields made me think of that. And of something else: what I. F. Stone said when some pip-squeak, politically correct *avant la lettre*, asked him how he could admire the notorious slave owner Thomas Jefferson. His response stands as an epitaph for that war from which the American nation was born: "Because history is a tragedy and not a melodrama." ▀

ON THE WEB: See www.theatlantic.com/revolution for links to related material, including "Paul Revere's Ride," Longfellow's famous poem, which was published in the January, 1861, Atlantic.

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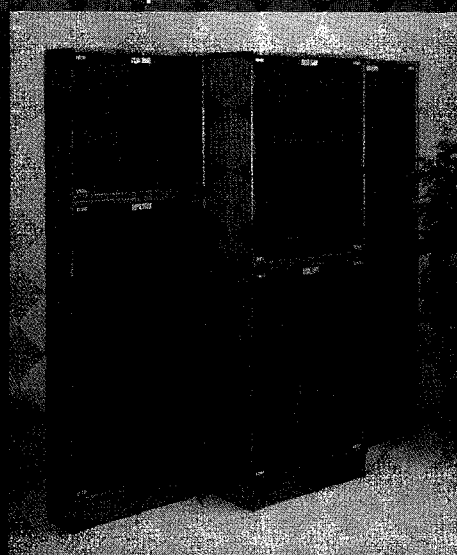
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IN LOCKSTEP WITH THE SEASONS

Cooking with nothing but what's in season seems punishingly severe as winter ends, but the exercise has year-round benefits

BY CORBY KUMMER

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One March night in London I poked my head into the kitchen of Elisabeth Luard, curious about what would accompany our Sunday-supper leg of lamb, whose garlic-and-rosemary marinade invitingly scented the house. Luard, a vibrant cook and naturalist, and the author of *The Old World Kitchen*, proudly pointed to an earthenware dish of turnips baked with butter and sage. "These were dug yesterday from a farm up north," she said. "So were the potatoes in the oven with the joint. A friend brought them down last evening." She beamed in anticipation of the treat we were about to enjoy.

I hope I managed to hide my disappointment. This would be my one meal of the trip in someone's home, and I had been looking forward to trying some of the lovely things I'd seen in the produce stalls at street markets—mandarin oranges, for instance, and varieties and colors of peppers and radicchio that never reached my Boston markets so early in the year. Were the greengrocers all closed on Sunday? I inquired, helpfully mentioning my love of baby artichokes.

Luard gave me a quizzical look. "Oh, of course you can buy all that," she said. "But I like serving what I know just came out of the ground."

It took me a number of years to appreciate her stance. Specifically, it took dinners at two Pacific Northwest restaurants—Sooke Harbour House, on Vancouver Island, and The Herbfarm, near Seattle—that adopt a fundamentalist approach to using local, seasonal ingredients, an approach most chefs just talk about. If something doesn't grow in exactly that climate at exactly that moment, these restaurants won't feature it.

Sooke Harbour House is the object of pilgrimages by food lovers who expect enthralling dishes made exclusively with ingredients from the restaurant's own gardens and the surrounding forest and sea. When I ate there, I was visiting a

friend, a teacher at the University of Victoria, who had never thought to dine at Sooke, although it was only a forty-minute drive from the university—its exalted reputation made it seem both fancy and forbidding. I, too, had been put off by a seemingly pointless purism, but I wanted to see for myself.



I was surprised when the contours of what looked like a very large and rambling Cape Cod cottage emerged from a dense March fog. Its dramatic position overlooking a sheltered harbor became clear only when we entered the dining room. The whole place, which is also an inn, was surprisingly casual—decorated with distinguished art made by First Peoples, as Indian tribes are called in Canada, and furnished with rag rugs and mismatched tables and spindle-back wooden chairs. The dining room looked like an enclosed porch, with windows onto the gardens and the sea. Sinclair

Philip, who owns Sooke with his wife, Frédérique, began his career teaching political economics, and read voraciously about native plants once the couple had decided to open the inn and restaurant. He asked us with a professorial air if we had any dietary preferences. "Lemon juice!" I wanted to cry out, in my dread of an all-root-vegetable meal. "Anything green and fresh!"

My doubts abated when a citrusy-tasting broth appeared, flavored with lemon verbena and based on fish and vegetables. Neither my friend nor I felt any trace of deprivation as we were served a succession of small plates covered with fish we had never before tasted, or never tasted so fresh: silky black cod; chewy limpets, each one like a long and meaty clam neck; fat, sweet sea scallops that Philip had dived for himself, he told us matter-of-factly, adding that they were the local purple-hinged rock scallops. There were vegetables, too, mostly cleansingly astringent greens I wasn't familiar with. The balancing acidity of a clear, amber-colored sauce against the richness of the cod came from vinegar made in the kitchen, using leftovers from bottles of the island's excellent wines. Aside from the vinegar and a frozen huckleberry puree in sorbet, everything at the meal had been picked or caught within the previous forty-eight hours.

Philip led us on a chilly moonlit tour of the gardens, which are romantically laid out on a hillside that slopes straight to the sea. Even in the island's temperate climate Sooke is privileged, Philip explained: hard frosts are rare, and the calm waters make diving for seafood easy year-round. The beds were indeed unexpectedly fecund: underground were potatoes and colorful small beets and exotic root vegetables such as salsify and Chinese artichoke; aboveground were kale and chicory and cabbages of many kinds. We sucked fir needles at Philip's urging and found

STEVEN SALERNO

them to be marvelously bright and refreshing—less balsamic than gently pungent, like baby gingerroot.

I came away sold: the fresher and more local the better. Herbs and vinegar, judiciously used, can take the place of the lemon juice I used to think indispensable. But could such an exercise be carried out in the far less forgiving climate of the Northeast, where hard frosts can prevent the digging of root vegetables for much of the winter? A friend passed along the cautionary advice he had once been given when contemplating a similar venture: "You're looking at a lot of turnips."

In adversity there is strength, I decided. Yes, the hardest time to try this purist approach at home is March and April—the cruelest months even on Vancouver Island. In the Northeast, winter stores of apples, pears, and squash have dwindled and shriveled, and the brussels sprouts have bolted. Cooks and diners, impatient after what seems like six months of winter, are desperate for spring vegetables such as asparagus and fiddlehead ferns weeks before they actually come up. "I always expect spring to start earlier," Jody Adams, the chef of the Cambridge restaurant Rialto, told me with a sigh as she was planning her April menus.

To get an idea of my early-spring possibilities I turned to Steve Johnson, the chef and owner of The Blue Room, another Cambridge restaurant, and a nationally prominent champion of local farmers. He gave me a short list of the things he can buy from the nearby Verrill Farm in March and a longer list for April. The vegetables included the dreaded turnips and rutabagas, but also carrots, leeks, potatoes, cabbages, and squash. Johnson told me that in response to encouragement from local chefs, Verrill had taken steps to improve storage, so that it could sell autumn and winter fruits and vegetables in good condition right through April. Johnson mentioned milk-fed lamb as coming available in March and April, and smelts and shad roe and the very first mackerel.

For recipe guidance I turned to Jerry Traunfeld, the chef of The Herbfarm, a twenty-minute drive northeast

of Seattle. Like Sooke Harbour House, The Herbfarm has attracted a following of people who make reservations months in advance and plan cross-country trips around meals there. Each restaurant has evolved a cuisine featuring ingredients that diners won't find elsewhere: at Sooke the astonishing variety of its seafood; at The Herbfarm more than a hundred herbs the restaurant grows. Both kitchens make use of the Northwest's abundant wild mushrooms, and of forest and field plants traditionally eaten only by Native Americans, including camas, a bulb with a flavor like that of Jerusalem artichokes. In late winter, awaiting the first tonic nettles, morels, and asparaguslike hop shoots, The Herbfarm presents a Taste of Trees dinner, with fir needles or birch syrup, for example, flavoring every course.

It's nearly impossible to duplicate these dishes at home, of course, or the ones that Edward Tuson, the young chef at Sooke Harbour House, invents nightly with seeming ease and great delicacy. Traunfeld, though, is a sometime cooking teacher who has continued the restaurant's original didactic role (the first meals included cooking instruction) in *The Herbfarm Cookbook*, adapting his dishes for use across the country. His recipes—for example, carrot soup based on fresh carrot juice rather than stock and flavored with toasted coriander seeds, chopped fresh ginger, and a big bunch of spearmint leaves—can rally the flagging spirits of anyone discouraged by the wait for something fresh and green.

A Traunfeld recipe that will vanquish thoughts of seasonal deprivation is halibut baked with leeks, apple, and lovage. Halibut, perhaps the finest-flavored whitefish, comes into season in the late winter and early spring (salmon, sea bass, or snapper can be substituted if they're in season near you). So does lovage, an herb like celery leaves with moxie, to which I became addicted after the writer Barbara Kafka showed me what it could do for chicken soup. Lovage trumpets the end of winter like nothing else. The dish uses apple cider, white wine, and sherry vinegar to provide sweetness and acid, to set the stage for the unstoppable lovage.

To make four servings, prepare what Traunfeld calls an apple-and-leek ragout.

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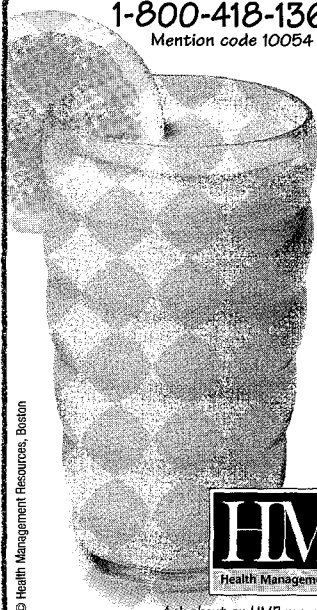
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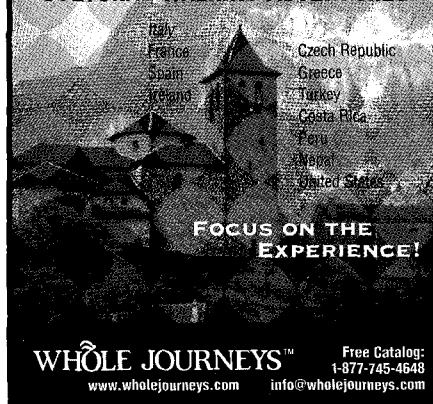
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Rinse thoroughly and cut into matchsticks the light-colored parts of three medium leeks. Cook them over medium heat, stirring often, in two or three tablespoons of butter (or olive oil, if you're relaxing the local-only rules) for ten minutes or so, until they soften and begin to brown. Add three quarters of a cup of dry white wine and cook until most of the liquid has evaporated; add one and a half cups of unfiltered apple cider (or juice if you can't find cider) and three quarters of a teaspoon of salt, and gently boil for about ten minutes more. Stir into the leeks one large tart apple, such as a Granny Smith or a Braeburn, peeled, cored, and diced; two tablespoons of coarsely chopped fresh lovage leaves (an alternative would be flat-leaf parsley plus a teaspoon of fresh lemon thyme); and two tablespoons of sherry vinegar. Taste for seasoning and set aside for up to two hours or in the refrigerator for up to two days.

Cut one and a half to two pounds of skinless halibut (or other) fillets into four equal pieces. Preheat the oven to 425° and reheat the ragout if necessary to the simmering point. Pour it into an ungreased twelve-by-nine-inch baking dish and set the fillets in the ragout so that they are partially submerged. Cover closely with a buttered sheet of parchment paper or foil. Bake for ten to fifteen minutes, until the fish is just translucent in the center; it will continue to cook once out of the oven.

Those who insist on something green can take their chances with ramps—turbocharged long leaves that pack the strongest imaginable garlic and leek flavors and have a mean afterburn. Ramps appear wild in the Northeast in late March or early April, followed by the pretty if soapy-tasting fiddleheads. Those who are willing to wait a few weeks can content themselves with roasted parsnips, my favorite root vegetable for their uncloying sweetness and faint bitter undertone. Traunfeld accents them with thyme and balsamic vinegar. For four servings heat the oven to 425° and peel and cut two pounds of parsnips into logs two inches long and half an inch wide. Put two or three tablespoons of butter or olive oil into a shallow baking dish large enough to hold the parsnips in a single layer; if using butter, place the dish in the hot oven

just until the butter melts. Stir into the fat one and a half tablespoons of packed dark-brown sugar and a tablespoon of balsamic vinegar; add the parsnips, season with salt and pepper, and toss to coat the pieces evenly. Bake for twenty minutes, remove the pan from the oven, stir in three tablespoons of coarsely chopped fresh thyme, and bake for ten minutes more. Herbal and deep-flavored, these parsnips can tide vegetable lovers over until the first peas and fava beans appear.

“When you start, it seems like a loss,” Ron Zimmerman, the founder and owner of The Herbfarm, told me about his decision to banish all things not strictly local and seasonal. “After you’ve done it, not to stay with the rhythms of the seasons seems like a loss in reverse. Sure, there are fewer things in winter, but what there is seems more valuable and appropriate. And things in spring seem more exciting.”

I won’t stop buying organic salad greens and hothouse herbs year round—and I have no plans to give up lemons either. But I’ve stopped buying California or Florida asparagus, biding my time until the first late-May ecstasy of local stalks reminds me what asparagus should taste like. I even wait for local peas to arrive in late June—the only way to have them as sweet as frozen peas, which are among the few worthwhile frozen vegetables.

More important, attending to what grows locally invigorates my thinking about the food I’ll make on any night of the year. It’s something like trying to write or talk without using the verb “to be”: you may not have the energy or the will to keep it up for very long, but the exercise adds tone and muscle to your language or cooking.

“Why buy something that’s not grown in the area?” Amanda Hesser asks herself in *The Cook and the Gardener*, a charming account of a year she spent as a private cook in Burgundy. “It just confuses my cooking.” I don’t live in Burgundy, or in the temperate Pacific Northwest rain forest. But her aperçu is one I’d like to live by. **A**

ON THE WEB: For more by Corby Kummer—including his Atlantic Unbound food column, Corby’s Table—see www.theatlantic.com/corby.

THE ERGONOMIC ROCKING CHAIR

*In handmade rocking chairs, and mass-produced ones
as well, beauty is as beauty does*

BY MARSHALL JON FISHER

.....

When Mike Richter, the New York Rangers' All-Star goalie, had back problems a couple of years ago, he flew to Los Angeles to see a specialist. He also started spending more time in his handcrafted rocking chair, made by Robert Erickson, a woodworker in Nevada City, California. The chair, which Richter showed me recently, is a sculpture of soft walnut curves, with swooping ash back slats and dark-oak dowels set so smoothly into the arms as to seem a part of the original wood. The chair's elegant form suits its function: the seat curves beneath one's thighs, and the back slats gently press against the lumbar region as one rocks. How many objets d'art can provide a lower-back massage? Richter's back is much better now, and though he wouldn't give all the credit to his chair, he doesn't discount its effect entirely. "The chair gives some relief for that part of your back that takes the biggest beating in hockey," he told me. "I just love the thing."

Erickson makes "studio furniture"—pieces designed to be artistic as well as functional. In 1975, when Erickson was twenty-eight, he built—and immediately sold—his first rocking chair. Ever since, rockers have been his mainstay. Like any self-respecting studio-furniture artist, he built his shop himself, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, and Erickson and five assistants make about a hundred pieces of furniture there each year. Half of these are rocking chairs, most tailored to the customer. "Building rocking chairs has been a fascinating experience," Erickson told me recently. "People are very intimately engaged with their rocking chairs, so all of a sudden I'm getting intimately engaged with them."

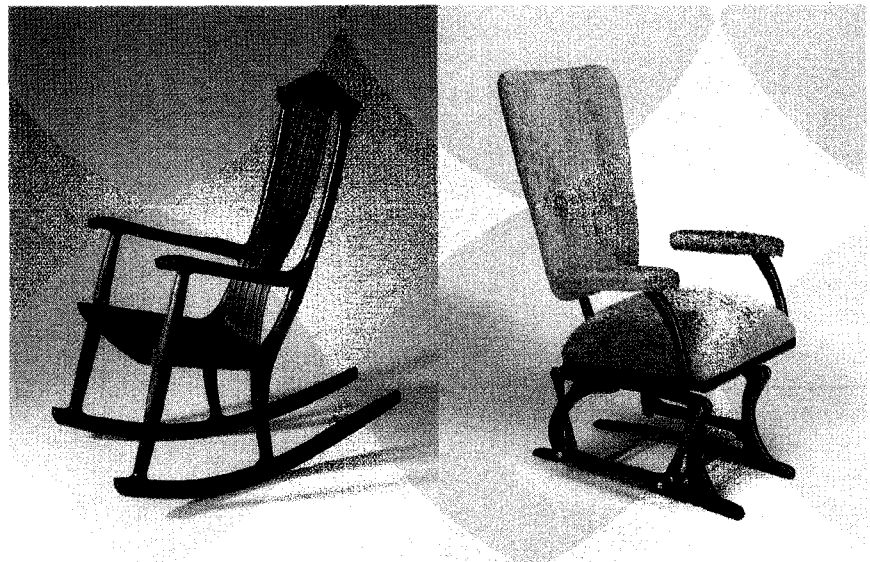
A quintessentially American object, the rocking chair has, surprisingly, been around only about as long as this country has. Records of rocking cradles made of hollowed-out logs date back about a thousand years, but apparently no one

thought to apply the idea to furniture for adults until the eighteenth century. It is unknown who first bolted curved "skates" onto the legs of a regular chair, but such primitive rocking chairs first appeared in the American Colonies in the 1740s.

The revolutionary design caught on quickly, and rocking chairs soon came to symbolize the practical and inventive spirit of the new land. To the Eng-

chusetts, prominently displayed two rockers. The last chair Abraham Lincoln ever sat in was a well-worn cushioned rocker from the manager's office at Ford's Theater. Chairs in this upholstered Grecian style, with curved backs and scrolled arms, are now known as Lincoln rockers.

Other Presidents, including William McKinley, both Roosevelts, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, have been associated with rocking chairs, but none more so than John F. Kennedy. A doctor suggested that Kennedy use a rocking chair to ease back pain resulting from a war injury, and duplicates of the Appalachian oak rocker he bought soon graced the White House, Camp David, and all the



Left, Robert Erickson's floating-back rocker; right, a platform rocker by Peter Handler

lish they also represented the déclassé nature of the upstart colonists. One nineteenth-century woman visitor wrote of a group sitting "lazily in a species of rocking-chair,—which is found wherever Americans sit down,—cradling themselves backwards and forwards, with a lazy, lounging, sleeping air, that makes me long to make them get up and walk." Another Englishwoman wrote, "How this lazy and ungraceful indulgence ever became general, I cannot imagine; but the nation seems wedded to it."

Indeed, rocking chairs had by the nineteenth century become a fixture on Appalachian porches, in western ranch parlors, and in the homes of Presidents. John Adams's house in Quincy, Massa-

Kennedy estates; the President even dragged one around the world on Air Force One.

Kennedy also inspired a renewed interest in rocking-chair design, notably on the part of an artisan named Sam Maloof. Maloof, who has been called the greatest woodworker in the world, and who was one of a handful of craftspeople who sparked the studio-furniture movement, was forty-five in 1961 and already a pre-eminent furniture designer in Los Angeles when a friend suggested that he create a rocking chair for the new President. Kennedy was assassinated before Maloof finished the project, but a decade later he developed the

first major innovation in rocking-chair design in a century.

In the 1800s several now classic rocking-chair forms appeared, among them the spindle-back Windsor rocker; the Boston rocker, with its curved seat and arms and decorated crest; the Shaker rocking chair, with a slatted back and woven seat; and the platform rocker, which rocks or glides on a stationary base. For much of the twentieth century, however, the rocking chair received little attention from the design world. Then, in the early 1970s, Sam Maloof began to experiment. He designed long, elegant skis that curve inward at the back like an antelope's horns. To make them strong enough he used seven laminated strips of wood for each ski: the result is both visually striking and as hard as iron.

He had sold only a few chairs before he met a potential customer with a lower-back problem, Maloof told me recently. He took a piece of wood, held it against his own back, and curved it to fit, creating what has become his trademark ergonomic spindle. He lowered the seat to relax the angle of the sitter's legs; raised the arms, which encourages deeper breathing; and completed a design that has found its way into the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the White House, the Vice President's mansion, and President Jimmy Carter's office in Atlanta.

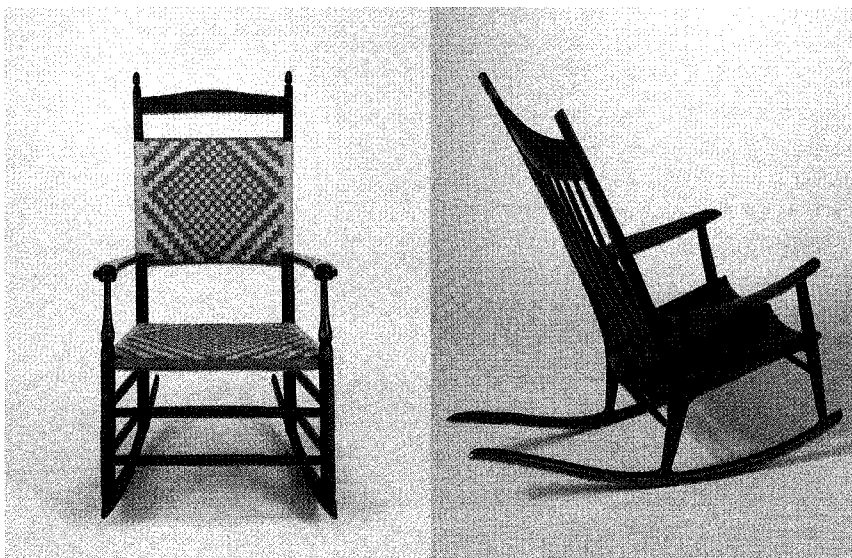
"Maloof took the rocker to a new plateau of expression," says Jonathan Fairbanks, an art consultant who was for many years the curator of American decorative arts at Boston's MFA. Jeremy Adamson, a curator at the Smithsonian, calls the chair "among the most comfortable ever devised—and a creature of rare beauty." At eighty-five, Maloof still builds chairs in a workshop next to his house, in the foothills of California's San Gabriel Mountains. If you have \$20,000 to spend and don't mind waiting years, you can own a new Maloof rocker. This is a steal compared with the early Maloof (nonrocking) chair that went for \$120,000 at auction last year.

Maloof's design has been copied by countless mundane furniture makers, and it has also inspired the work of younger artists. Among these is Erickson, who has added his own innovation: the flexible, or "floating," contoured

back. For years Erickson used cold-laminated slats that had some give in them, to provide lumbar support and also adjust to the shape of each sitter. In 1996, however, he met an archery-bow maker and had "an epiphany"; soon he had developed a technique much like one that has long been used in making bows. He now takes three thin strips of wood and flips the middle one over to offset the grain and "counteract the natural forces of the wood." This and a coating of Teflon enhance the strength and flexibility of his curved back slats.

Maloof used his own body as a universal measure and achieved spectacular results, but Erickson gives his customers fittings, measuring various physical di-

bridge in West Cornwall, Connecticut, Ian Ingersoll keeps their tradition alive. In the early 1970s Ingersoll was looking for inspiration to start his career and found it close to home, in the Shaker furniture of upstate New York and western New England. Thinking of the work as a form of apprenticeship, he put out word in the antiques world that he was willing to repair Shaker chairs. Over twelve years he learned firsthand how the Shakers gradually found the simplest and lightest design that would hold up under heavy use. It was Brother Robert Wagan, in the 1860s, who designed the ultimate Shaker chair—what Ingersoll calls "the best-designed rocking chair that has ever been made, in terms of comfort and



Left, Ian Ingersoll's Shaker-inspired chair; right, Sam Maloof's trademark design

mensions and observing each person's preferred "angle of repose." The depth and height of the seat, the height and width of the arms, the back shape, and the "mouth" of the chair—the angle between the seat and the back—all affect comfort. "Even half an inch," Erickson told me, "can make a real difference." His handiwork has made its way into the Smithsonian, among other museums, and into the homes of people willing to pay \$5,000 for a supremely comfortable work of art.

The Shakers, a religious sect that valued asceticism and simplicity, raised furniture making to an art form of their own in the nineteenth century. In a handsome riverside studio next to a covered

ability to withstand human use." Today Ingersoll designs his own contemporary furniture but also continues to reproduce that Wagan chair, exactly. "I wanted to make a state-of-the-art rocking chair," he says, "and it doesn't seem reasonable to make any changes to something that's already been done perfectly."

When Ingersoll started out, a Shaker original could be bought for \$100, cheaper than he could make a chair. But then Shaker artistry was "discovered," and during the 1980s prices shot up to the vicinity of \$2,500. Suddenly Ingersoll was able to sell his replicas for far less than the cost of originals. As his reputation grew, his prices rose, and today an Ingersoll-Wagan rocker costs \$800—but

that's still a fraction of the price of an original. And the replication is so fine that Ingersoll has found his own chairs being auctioned off as Shaker originals.

As Edward Cooke, a professor of American decorative arts at Yale, impressed upon me, however, fashioning a fine rocking chair doesn't necessarily mean making it out of wood. In a cavernous warehouse studio on the northwest side of Philadelphia, Peter Handler makes rocking chairs and other furniture out of anodized aluminum. After working as a jeweler for a decade, Handler turned to furniture making in the early 1980s. "I knew I wanted to create work that looks like where we're going rather than where we've been," he says, "but while I had the idea, I had no image. I spent a year or two knocking my head against the wall, taking wrong turns." Then he tried machining and discovered anodizing, an electrochemical process that builds a hard, dyeable oxide coating on the surface of metal. "Suddenly," he says, "I had a vocabulary that I could speak with, and develop."

Handler built tables, sofas, armchairs, and dining-room chairs. The chairs were comfortably and colorfully upholstered, and everything bore his trademark: a brightly colored futuristic metal frame. Then, a couple of years ago, he came across a Victorian platform rocker at an antiques store. "It had a spring, an adjustable back angle, and a footrest that came out: it was essentially a Victorian Barcalounger," he told me. Handler became fascinated with platform rockers and decided to create one. "The question was, how do I take this design and make it into my own twenty-first-century platform rocker?"

The answer is here, in the form of a \$4,500 extraordinarily comfortable rocker that looks like a friendly insect lit by a rainbow. The frame is bright red, purple, blue, and yellow, with soft cushioned upholstery. And the chair is simple and compact—a minimalist response to the antique piece it is based on.

The craftsmen mentioned so far typically make their chairs to order, and such care and expertise are expensive. Of course, relatively cheap mass-produced rocking chairs have long been available

too. The first widely manufactured rocking chair was probably the Boston rocker, which came along in the 1820s. Later in that century the Shakers built a furniture factory in Mount Lebanon, New York, and turned out rockers in eight standardized sizes, ranging in price from \$3.00 to \$8.00. The chairs were even sold in a Chicago department store.

Today you can buy contemporary variations on the Boston, Shaker, and Appalachian "settin'" rockers for \$200 or less at any number of furniture stores. For greater comfort but less aesthetic presence, there's the Dutailier Glider Chair (\$250–\$370), particularly popular with nursing mothers. And at the upper end of mass-produced ergonomic therapy, Back-Saver's FlexRock platform rocker can be had for \$995. There's probably nothing better for your back, but although the FlexRock's creator, Nathaniel Smith, who studied design in Denmark, hopes his chair has a pleasing look, he's the first to admit that "it's a long way from art."

Perhaps the highest nexus of art and ergonomics is the Erickson chair. Mike Richter, not only an NHL star but also a new father, says his chair "really cradles" him: "The angle and contours of the chair are such that it carries you like you'd carry an infant in your hands." The imagery is appropriate, because rockers not only reinvigorate us by promoting blood flow and keeping pressure off any one point in the back but also soothe us simply by rocking. Erickson speaks of "the magic of rocking, of rhythmic movement, like for babies," and Handler of "the almost self-hypnotic effect of the rocking chair." Bruce Chatwin wrote in *The Songlines* (1987) of experiments demonstrating that an automatic cradle, rocking at a rate of at least fifty cycles a minute, silences a crying baby. (Parents today carry out similar experiments for \$99.99.) He went on to theorize that this reflects an atavistic yearning for humankind's nomadic beginnings on the African savannah.

This may be a bit much to claim, but perhaps as we sit in rocking chairs, comforting our children or reading, we are transporting ourselves at least back to our own pendular infancy. We require more lumbar support now, but the need to rock remains. ■

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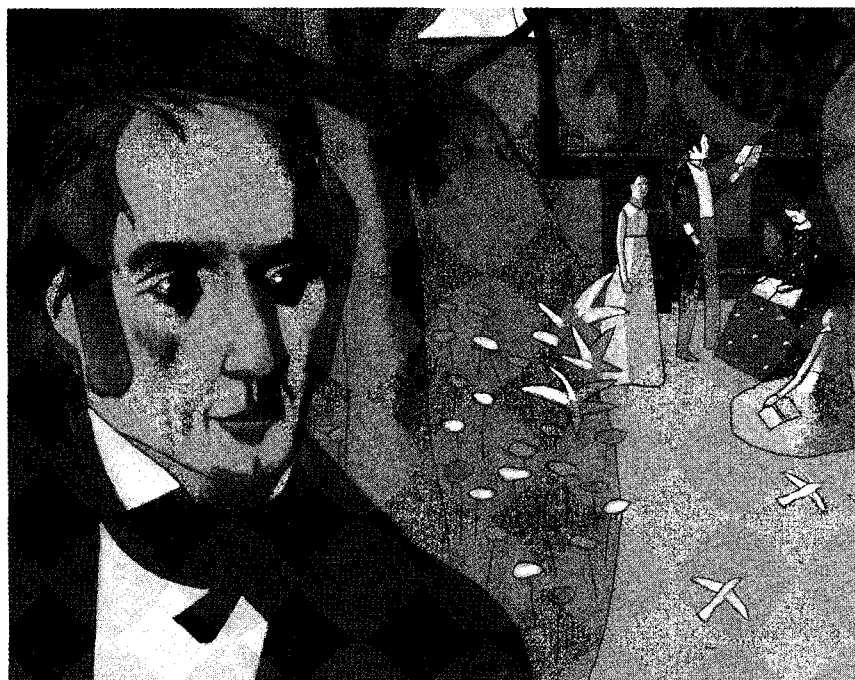
BY JULIET BARKER

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Biographers have many and varied reasons for choosing their subjects, ranging from the high-minded to the simply prurient. For John Worthen it all began with a missing cartload of dung. On March 27, 1802, Dorothy Wordsworth made an entry in what has become known as her Grasmere journal:

Saturday a divine morning—at Breakfast W[illia]m wrote part of an ode—Mr Olliff sent the Dung & W[illia]m went to work in the garden we sate all day in the orchard—

William Knight, the first editor of the journal, considered the arrival of the dung and the poet's subsequent employment to be merely "trivial details" that could legitimately be omitted from his edition because they were not "of any literary or biographical value." As Worthen entertainingly points out, however, in his preface to *The Gang*, what may seem like a minor editorial decision has important consequences. Knight's version, leaping straight from Wordsworth's composition of "part of an ode" to his sitting with his sister in the orchard, implies that the poet was so exhausted by his literary efforts at breakfast that he was incapable of doing anything else for the rest of the day. It conjures up the perfect image of the Romantic poet, giving his all to his art and suffering in consequence. This seems even more appropriate when we know that the poem Wordsworth was working on was his incomparable *Immortality Ode*. The rude reality was somewhat different. The full journal entry suggests that the retreat to the orchard was



actually a response to the unromantic but necessary physical labor of digging in the newly arrived dung, without which the Wordsworths could not grow the vegetable crops on which they were dependent to eke out their impoverished existence. For them, Worthen observes, the arrival of the dung was in its own way probably as important as that of the poem.

Worthen uses this enjoyably ludicrous example of editorial high-handedness as an argument for the serious thesis that underpins and justifies his book. It would be a good idea, he suggests, for a biography

just for once, to include all that it is possible to include, rather than to start from the point of view that selection and shaping are the biographer's first principles; while it would also be sensible to make the biography, so far as possible, of all the people in the group, not just of a central figure chosen ... for his "literary value."

Because such an approach is impractical for a full-length life, Worthen puts his theory into practice by writing a detailed biography covering a brief period in the lives of what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "the Gang"—Coleridge himself, William Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, and Mary Hutchinson (Wordsworth's future wife) and her sister, Sara. The year he

chooses, 1802, was one that saw momentous events in the creative and personal lives of his subjects: Wordsworth's writing included part of his *Immortality Ode* and *The Leech Gatherer*; Coleridge produced *Dejection: An Ode*; Wordsworth ended his hitherto exclusive partnership with Dorothy by marrying Mary; Coleridge's marriage to the much maligned Sarah Fricker (significantly always excluded from the Gang) fell apart, and his growing infatuation with Sara Hutchinson became a hopeless obsession. It is a period not overburdened

**THE GANG:
COLERIDGE, THE
HUTCHINSONS &
THE WORDSWORTHS
IN 1802**

by John Worthen

Yale, 344 pages, \$30.00

with biographical material: There are only about fifty published letters from Coleridge, a mere fifteen from William and Dorothy, and five from their brother John. There are Coleridge's private jottings in his notebooks, which are alternately revelatory and gnomic, and, crucially, there is Dorothy's journal, which—apart from its frustrating reticence on the most intriguing episode (the Wordsworths' meeting in Calais with William's former mistress, Annette Vallon, and their illegitimate daughter)—provides a structure for 1802 that goes beyond the merely chronological.

Worthen's analysis of this material is acute, critical, and perceptive. He questions accepted readings and datings and argues persuasively for new interpretations. By the simple expedient of comparing extant manuscripts with Dorothy's journal references to copying her brother's poems, he dramatically illustrates how much of her work has been lost—work that, as he emphasizes, was vital to Wordsworth in the creation and revision of his poetry. A similar exercise reveals that very few of the letters Dorothy wrote have survived. Worthen may exaggerate the total number by treating each letter referred to in the journal as if it were a new one rather than perhaps a continuation of a previous one; but even on a more cautious reckoning Dorothy wrote more letters every month than have survived for the entire year. It is therefore all too easy to underestimate the importance of her role in constantly bringing the members of the Gang together through her letters. She acted as a conduit not only for all their news but also—more important—for Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry and the responses of the rest of the Gang to it. Wordsworth published reluctantly and infrequently; this was the only audience he wrote for and whose opinion he cared about. Without his sister's letters he could not have functioned so successfully as a poet.

Worthen is able to paint the bigger picture through these and similar small insights: for instance, Wordsworth reverted to poems about childhood and children as his marriage to Mary and the probability of legitimate fatherhood approached; Sarah Coleridge's exclusion from the Gang is tellingly illustrated by

the fact that not a single manuscript of a poem that circulated within the group was written in her hand. What emerges most strikingly and effectively from the narrow focus of this biography, however, is the collective creative process engendered by the Coleridge-Wordsworth-Hutchinson relationship. Because Coleridge and Wordsworth quarreled so bitterly from 1810 to 1812, their biographers are generally divided into hostile camps, each determined to establish the intellectual precedence of its subject (as is, for different reasons, the camp of Dorothy's biographers, who are anxious to prove that her journal entries pre-date and therefore inspired her brother's poems).

Worthen, absolutely rightly, denounces such unseemly attempts to claim originality solely for one or another member of the group. He challenges the lazy repetition of the notion that the first four stanzas of the *Immortality Ode*, together with *Dejection* and *The Leech Gatherer*, "form a sequence, provoking and answering each other, and showing in the process a widening gap between the two poets." As he ably demonstrates, all three poems—despite appearing to be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"—"actually had a creative history of metaphor, plan, draft version and revision." More important, it was a common history, because the Wordsworths and Coleridge enjoyed what Worthen aptly calls "a shared habit of mind." It is therefore pointless and even misleading to try to identify who thought of what first. It was never a question of debt. A particular image in a poem or a journal entry could just as easily have been coined by Wordsworth, who composed his verse aloud; Coleridge, whose verbal powers were among the wonders of the age; or Dorothy, who gave both men eyes and ears. It then became the public property of the Gang and was discussed, analyzed, and commented on; the resultant poems grew naturally out of the conversation of the people in the group. The Hutchinson sisters—who, like Dorothy, as Worthen says, copied (and freely criticized) hundreds of lines of poetry, wrote vast numbers of letters of their own, and copied pages from other people's letters for wider circulation—were an integral part of this creative group.

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One of the most interesting results of Worthen's refreshingly iconoclastic approach is the raising of questions about the wider biographical process. Time and again I found myself cheering his caustic comments, particularly about the interpretation of the troubled relationships among Coleridge, his wife, and Sara Hutchinson. "What biographers and critics treat as biographical source material simply isn't," he says of the so-called Asra poems, after making the equally valid point that biographers "depend on hypothetical dates assigned to poems hypothesized to be written to Sara." "Biographers who scent romance ... will not be put off by a simple lack of evidence," he thunders elsewhere, arguing that they "wish for evidence, seek it where they may, and create it if it does not exist." This is undoubtedly true of some biographers, and Worthen provides a much needed corrective to Richard Holmes's widely acclaimed, seductively written, but fundamentally flawed two-volume biography, *Coleridge, Early Visions* (1989) and *Coleridge, Darker Reflections* (1998).

Not unnaturally, I felt more uncomfortable with his occasional criticisms of my own biography, *Wordsworth: A Life* (2000). Worthen may be right that John Wordsworth's emotional last letter to Mary Hutchinson, written just before she married his brother, was prompted by a message from her that he should regard their home as his own, but he is wrong to say that I base my argument that John was in love with Mary "entirely" on the strength of this single letter.

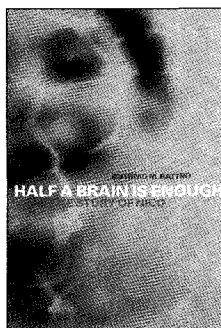
Do such quibbles matter, except to the aggrieved biographer who objects to being misrepresented? I think they do, if only because Worthen's splendidly pugnacious preface sets up standards of biographical and critical interpretation by which he himself ought to be judged. His strictures against biographers' selective approach to their material ring rather hollow when, for instance, we realize that he has not gone beyond the published sources at his disposal, and that there are at least as many unpublished as there are published letters from this period by members of the Wordsworth and Hutchinson families—not to mention letters from the wider circle of Charles

Lamb, Robert Southey, and other friends. Similarly, William and Dorothy may have belonged to the Gang, but not exclusively. They also belonged to "the set," which was their name for the five Wordsworth siblings, and the concerns of the set in 1802 were, if anything, more important than those of the Gang. The death of Sir James Lowther, in May, changed everything for the set. After almost twenty years of his withholding his debt to their father's estate, the Wordsworths were about to receive their inheritance. The portion going to William and Dorothy totaled £137,700 (about \$220,000) in today's terms—enough for him to marry and for her to be independent. Worthen only touches on the resolution of this matter, which absorbed much of their time, attention, and correspondence in 1802.

The narrow focus of this biography has its rewards, but it also has its pitfalls, particularly when Worthen offers wider generalizations. It is not true, for instance, that "rather few" people could make Wordsworth laugh, or that he was "never really young"; that the "experiment" of Hartley Coleridge's living with the Wordsworths was "significantly" never repeated after 1801; or that "Going for Mary" is the first poem William addressed to his future wife. Worthen seems unaware that William, like Dorothy, went to the same dame school in Penrith that Mary did, or that the corner of Grasmere churchyard where Hartley Coleridge was to be buried in 1849 included the graves not just of Sara Hutchinson and Wordsworth's young children, Catherine and Thomas, but also of his nephew John Wordsworth and, most important, his beloved daughter Dora, beside whom Wordsworth had already arranged that he himself should lie.

These criticisms aside, *The Gang* is a fascinating and provocative book. As Wordsworth's poems so often did, it captures a moment in time—and, by putting the moment under a microscope, leads us to new insights into a unique form of literary collaboration. But more than this, it is a book as much about the art of biography as about its nominal subjects. Challenging the orthodoxies, it also forces us to rethink our preconceptions and methodologies. It should be compulsory reading for every biographer. ▀

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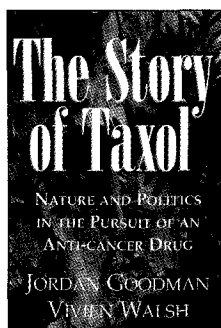
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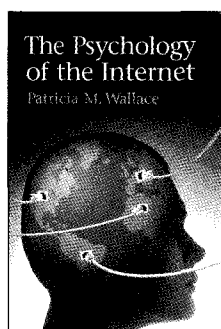
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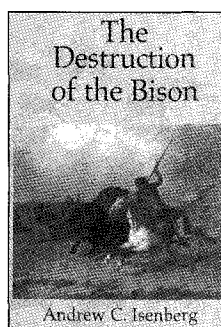
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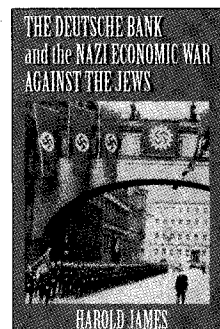
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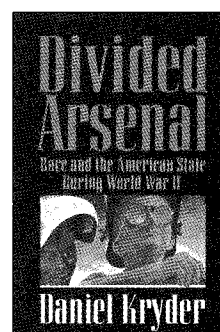
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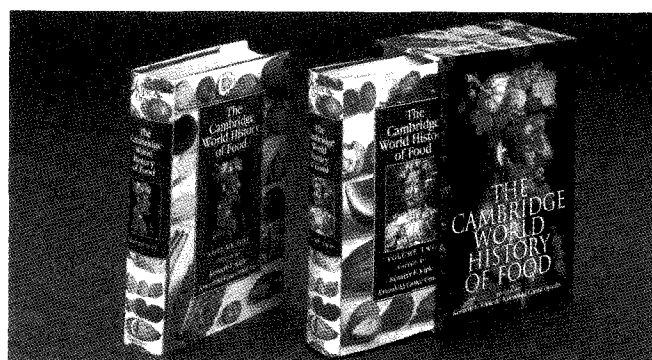
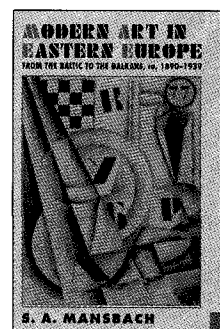
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BOOKS

NO APOLOGIES NECESSARY

An unsure effort to rescue the reputation of Carson McCullers

BY FRANCES KIERNAN

.....

In 1940 Carson McCullers—born Lula Carson Smith, in Columbus, Georgia—dazzled the New York literary world with the publication of her first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. The novel's title captures the theme of virtually all of McCullers's fiction. The author was twenty-three years old. That she was gifted there was no question: almost everywhere the book received excellent notices. Moreover, McCullers herself made for excellent copy. At once shy and forthcoming, diffident and brazen, with her cropped hair and long legs, her marked southern accent and her fondness for wearing shorts or men's trousers, she could easily pass for her novel's adolescent heroine—or for a sixteen-year-old boy. As it happened, she was married to

Reeves McCullers, a man far better looking than she was, who had moved with her from the South to New York. Already her marriage was showing signs of strain. There were public fights and a shared taste for flirtations with members of both sexes and a growing dependence on alcohol. Soon the couple would be officially separated. But McCullers would always be indebted to Reeves for his early support and encouragement and for a surname that suited "Carson" far better than "Smith" did. (She had dropped the Lula long before.)

Over the next several years Carson and Reeves would separate—going so far at one point as to obtain a divorce—and reunite with astonishing frequency. Some friends believed that Reeves was

jealous of his wife's success. Others believed that Carson was impossible to live with—too insistent on being the center of attention and too quick to play the part of an invalid. In fairness, Carson's health was not all that it might have been. Furthermore, she was accustomed to being coddled by a doting mother who early on had declared her to be a prodigy.

Although this troubled couple couldn't manage to live happily together, they could never seem to find partners that suited them better. Certainly there was a bond. If the protestations of devotion in their letters are to be credited, the high point of their relations may have been during World War II, when Reeves served for an extended period with the Army. On his own overseas, he proved to be something of a hero. On her own, Carson managed to get by—in her fashion. When her father died, in 1944, the doting mother moved north and set up a home for Carson in Nyack, within easy commuting distance from New York.

Before long Carson McCullers was an international celebrity—read and admired by everyone from Isak Dinesen and Elizabeth Bowen to Edith Sitwell

CARSON MCCULLERS: A LIFE

by Josyane Savigneau,
translated by
Joan E. Howard

Houghton Mifflin
370 pages, \$30.00

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

and Louis Untermeyer. By 1946 she had written not only an impressive number of stories and articles but also three highly regarded short novels (*Reflections in a Golden Eye*, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*, and *The Member of the Wedding*), the last of which she later turned into an award-winning play. That fall she and Reeves decided to go to Paris. There she suffered two severe strokes, leaving her partially paralyzed on her left side. In Nyack the following March she slit her wrist and ended up in Payne Whitney, a psychiatric hospital. Five years later Reeves managed to kill himself, succumbing to a lethal dose of barbiturates and alcohol.

Although Carson went on to live for another fourteen years, her best work was behind her. Despite her increasing infirmity she managed to travel, to attract exciting new friends, and to write a Broadway play and even a best-selling novel. But owing to the strokes and to alcohol, the appealing adolescent came more and more to resemble a gargoyle. A succession of surgeries did little to help matters. In time she was relying on a wheelchair and spending long hours in bed. One of the few bright spots in her life was Mary Mercer, a local child psychiatrist, who first saw McCullers as a patient and then went on to become a dear friend—encouraging her to dictate her memoirs once she could no longer lift a pen. McCullers was working on those memoirs in September of 1967, when she was felled by a severe cerebral hemorrhage. She was fifty years old.

Sadly, thirty-four years after her death one doesn't hear much about Carson McCullers. Part of the reason is the fickle nature of literary fashion. (One doesn't hear much about William Faulkner, either, or about Katherine Anne Porter.) Part of it has to do with the fact that her largest audience has always been younger readers, who nowadays tend to seek out the work of their contemporaries. Certainly it hasn't helped that Truman Capote and Harper Lee, two southern writers who came along soon after McCullers, gave readers tales that take place in a setting that bears more than a passing resemblance to the small-town-Georgia world she evoked in her most celebrated fiction. (Of Harper Lee,

McCullers saw fit to write to a cousin, "Well, honey, one thing we know is that she's been poaching on my literary preserves.") Nor has it helped that the first thorough examination of her life—Virginia Spencer Carr's 1975 biography, *The Lonely Hunter*—can leave a reader with the sour feeling that McCullers showed a reckless disregard for the abundant gifts manifest in her early work.

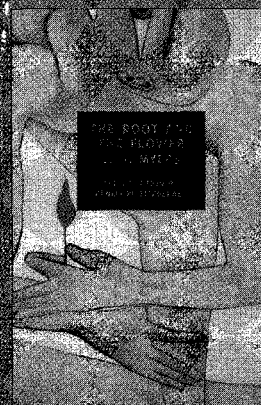
With *Carson McCullers: A Life*, Josyane Savigneau, the acclaimed biographer of Marguerite Yourcenar and the editor of the cultural pages of *Le Monde*, sets out to rescue the reputation of both the woman and the writer. In the process she does her best to undercut what she regards as a "banal" view of McCullers—one that is incapable of appreciating what it means to live the life of an artist—and to dispel the notion that her subject's later years were marked primarily by physical infirmity and unfulfilled promise. Consequently, she never portrays McCullers as selfish or demanding but, instead, celebrates her as a "strange woman-child" who, for all her brilliance, "never really grew up."

In short, Savigneau gives readers a portrait that is very different from the one to be found in Carr's biography (a scrupulously researched volume at least 200 pages longer than this new book), to which she is far more indebted than she sometimes chooses to acknowledge in her notes. In her introduction Savigneau is quick to tell us where she believes Carr went wrong.

Despite an appearance of neutrality often found in American biographies—never a conjecture on points that are obscure or unexplained but a piling up of details, particulars, and testimonials as if all were of equal importance—Virginia Spencer Carr's work creates a rather negative image of Carson McCullers.

No one could fault *her* for neutrality as she goes on to state with great assurance, "Virginia Spencer Carr shows little warmth—much less tenderness or compassion—for her subject, who, visibly, shocks her puritanism and moralism."

There is no question that Carr's detailed account of McCullers's decline, with its seemingly endless list of trans-



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gressions, makes for dismaying reading, but to accuse Carr of puritanism seems excessive. At one point Savigneau appears to lump Carr with all those who have mistakenly regarded McCullers's craving for physical affection as a promiscuous bisexuality or lesbianism. Yet when one looks at *The Lonely Hunter*, one sees something very different. Carr wrote,

Carson wanted and needed warmth and tenderness. It could simply be the warmth of a touch, either a man's or a woman's—and she had to be touching always, sometimes to the disquietude of her female companions—whether it was the brush of a hand, the pat of a knee, an embrace on the cheek ... She wanted as much closeness as she could get from a beloved, but consummation rarely was a part of it.

Has something been lost in translation? Or has Savigneau willfully misread the text?

In an introduction to Carr's book Tennessee Williams wrote of how he "knew at once that this lady from Georgia, Carson's native state, was someone who valued the spirit and the writing of Mrs. McCullers as deeply as I did." At the time of their meeting Carr was living in Columbus. If nothing else, Williams could count on her understanding of the town and the people that had helped to form his friend. Writing from Paris, McCullers's new biographer enjoys no such advantage. Inevitably this leads to some assertions surprising to an American audience. At one point Savigneau states that in America *The Member of the Wedding*—not *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*—"is the book most strongly identified with Carson McCullers." (She provides no documentation for this statement.) And she tells us, "Carson remained a girl of the Deep South, awkward, shy, unsociable, and withdrawn." At what age, one wonders, does she think southern belles get their start?

Savigneau, whose biography of Yourcenar manages to be at once passionate and judicious, graceful and fluent, seems to have strayed into terrain where her footing is not always sure. The same might be said of her translator. A reader will be startled to learn that "John Singer [the deaf mute of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*] is a hyperbolic figure of isolation." Or to hear that the newly fa-

mous Carson McCullers "drank gin in orangeade glasses." Or to discover that on their first trip abroad Reeves was hoping to introduce his wife "to the charming little ports of Brittany and to the strange magic of the French countryside, with its dozens of contrasting landscapes paradoxically assembled on a land mass smaller than the state of Texas." These are not fatal, but they are a bit disconcerting in a book about a writer who always chose her words with care.

Savigneau does have something Virginia Spencer Carr never had, and that is permission to quote from certain letters and unpublished work. She had access to two incomplete memoirs, which McCullers wrote at the suggestion of Mary Mercer, and a cache of tender letters exchanged by Reeves and Carson when Reeves was overseas. The letters serve to remind us that these two did actually love each other. And the memoirs give us a chance to see certain significant events from Carson's perspective.

Still, it could be argued that the letters and the memoirs are not of a quality to merit their being quoted at great length. Nor are they necessarily as reliable as Savigneau would have us believe. The letters were written in wartime, when a certain degree of posturing is to be expected even from men and women who have no bent for self-dramatization. And the memoirs inevitably reflect a perfectly natural inclination to smooth over incidents that caused the writer pain.

If nothing else, the mere fact that McCullers was able to dictate these memoirs helps to buttress the case Savigneau hopes to make for her subject's resilience and staying power as a writer. That Savigneau makes full use of the memoirs is not surprising. And it is not surprising that she relies heavily on Mary Mercer. After all, Mercer eventually chose to break decades of silence and grant Savigneau an exclusive interview—an interview to which Savigneau was permitted to take no pad and pencil or tape recorder and to which she resorts for an ending to her book.

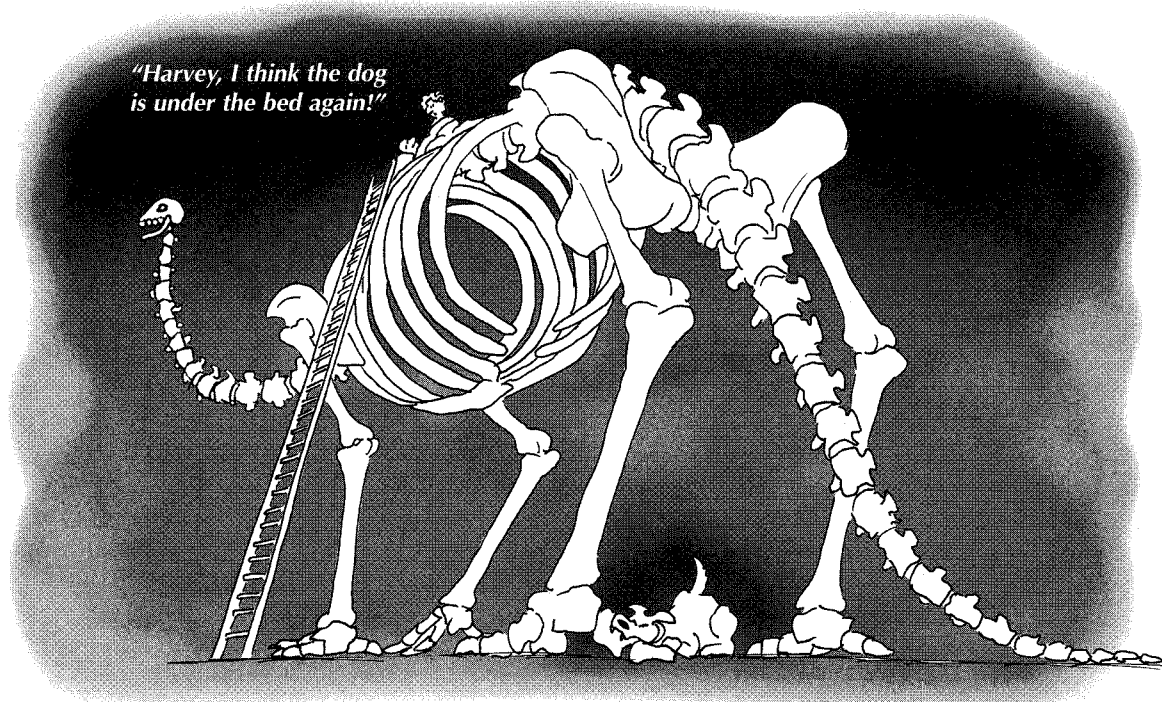
"She was ageless, Carson was," Savigneau quotes Mercer as saying. "All she had was a mad desire to stay alive. To live and to write. To live in order to write."

The interview, which is more like a monologue than a conversation, concludes with a ringing tribute: "She was ... yes ... a magnificent writer and, I was going to say 'obviously,' a magnificent being. A natural. A person. That is what people must see." English is not Savigneau's first language, but she claims to have had no difficulty in recalling Mercer's exact words. All the same, one can't help noticing that at times she and this American psychiatrist sound uncannily alike.

Sixty-one years have passed since the publication of *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*. Read again, Carson McCullers's first book proves to be richer and more ambitious than one remembered. There was very little that its young author was unwilling to grapple with—be it Christianity or communism or simply a loss of youth. Thus her first book may well be McCullers's best, but that is to say a good deal. All her books portray the sadness and isolation she saw as endemic to the human condition. And all are of interest. For instance, one need not share Savigneau's opinion that *Reflections in a Golden Eye* is the "most provocative," the "most controlled," the "most tight-lipped," and the "most serenely merciless" of McCullers's books in order to find disturbing its tale of an adulterous affair that leads to an unlikely obsession, an untimely death, and a brutal murder. And one need not go along with those readers who cherish *The Member of the Wedding* as McCullers's "masterpiece of masterpieces" to be touched or beguiled by its lonely twelve-year-old heroine, who makes up her mind to join her brother and his bride on their honeymoon, forcing herself on a couple she believes to be "the we of me."

Precisely what happened to Carson McCullers, a writer of enormous talent, will always remain a mystery. But there may be clues to be found in the life. Anyone wishing to get a fresh sense of that life may want to take a look at this new biography, keeping in mind certain words of caution from McCullers's old friend Tennessee Williams: "When physical catastrophes reduce, too early, an artist's power, his/her admirers must not and need not enter a plea nor offer apology." ■

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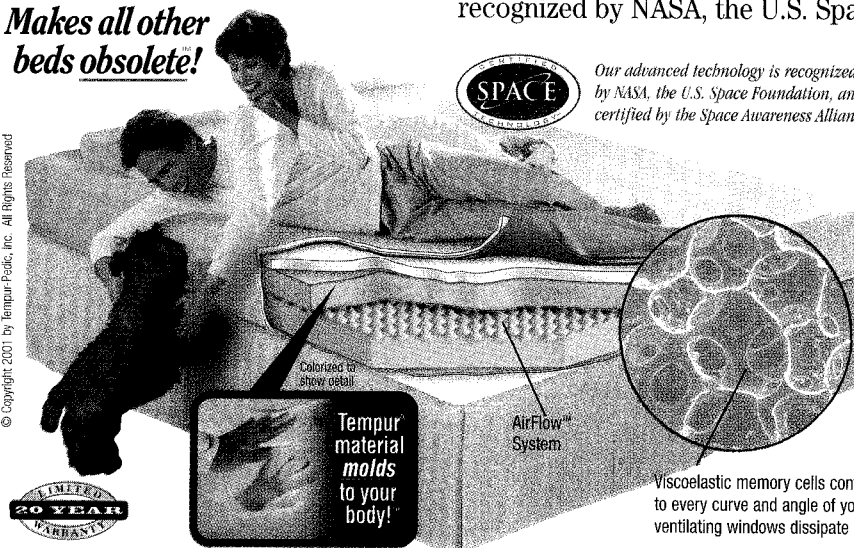
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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

April's plenitude of fiction; a family remembered and families revised; everything about nothing

Family lore provides the author of this wide-ranging family memoir an interesting lens through which to view the history of Newfoundland—or is it the other way around? In tracing the rise and fall of the proud and hopeful Goodyears, tracking their mysteries and filling their silences, David Macfarlane examines the way world history and personal history intersect, and does so in fast-moving chapters as intimate as parlor gossip. Three brothers die in the trenches of World War I. Three others survive to shape the island, their fortunes tied—like those of all its inhabitants—to its natural poverty, ingrained fecklessness, and uncertain political position, caught between Britain and Canada yet with its own romantic notions of independence. Though the business they form grows into a prominent concern, the brothers agree on nothing, and their lofty dreams—like their country's—ultimately fall victim to circumstances that more-realistic folk might have predicted.

This is a memory book, circling its subjects, making striking connections between the public and the private, the strange and the commonplace. Events separated by decades neatly dovetail to illuminate each other, often with gently comic or ironic effect, for the story of the Goodyears and Newfoundland is one of youthful ambitions meeting sometimes ugly realities. To deliver the past, Macfarlane gives himself free rein, choosing the tools of the historian, the memorialist, or the novelist at will, and if the combination sometimes feels uncomfortable and stagy (especially in the sections where he takes on the soon-to-be-killed soldiers' points of view), the feeling is fleeting. The book doesn't follow a plodding chronological order but hopscotches



THE
DANGER TREE
by David
Macfarlane
Walker and
Company, 320
pages, \$13.95

smartly across the past century, without ever eluding the reader. Each chapter chases digressions and weaves leitmotifs around stolid grandfathers and sentimental aunts, the narrative pivoting on charged images: the fire-ravaged interior of the island, for example, resembles the hell of no-man's land. The comparison is apt and earned, and typical of the book's pleasures. Macfarlane moves the reader through time and meaning nimbly, his improvised structure brilliantly pointing up how the past weighs on the present, and the larger movements of history on individual lives. —STEWART O'NAN

Louise Erdrich's new novel stretches to include such lofty topics as gender-bending, cross-cultural fusion, and the nature of miracles, but winds up hopelessly tangled in its own ambitions. Set on a North Dakota reservation, it depicts the life of Agnes DeWitt, a young nun who disguises herself as a Catholic priest after leaving her convent because she plays Chopin too soulfully. She miraculously shrouds her sex for the next eighty years, gently ministering to her unsuspecting flock as they endure plagues of disease, alcohol, and government chicanery. This promising setup is marred by Erdrich's inability to achieve an effectively consistent narrative tone. At times she is cloyingly melodramatic, such as when Agnes engages in a risky affair with a visiting young priest with movie-star looks. At others she is lowly comic, employing such set pieces as the



THE LAST
REPORT ON THE
MIRACLES AT
LITTLE NO HORSE
by Louise Erdrich
HarperCollins,
362 pages, \$26.00

slapstick hunt for an amorous moose and the bawdy funeral of a tumescent old medicine man. A subplot involving a local nun up for canonization never really catches fire. Only when Erdrich focuses on the lives of the native women who fight against the poverty and abuse that are their

birthright does her narrative come to life.

Erdrich's prose is equally unstable. Although she occasionally achieves an admirable lyricism, she also creates passages on which one might stumble while waiting in the supermarket check-out line—such as when a besotted farmer “let his seed onto the floor” upon seeing Agnes naked, and the response her Chopin playing elicits among her fellow nuns: “Sometimes a pause between the piercing sorrows of minor notes made a sister scrubbing the floor weep into the bucket where she dipped her rag so that the convent's boards, washed in tears, seemed to creak now in a human tongue.” The floorboards, it would seem, aren't all that's creaking. —STEPHEN AMIDON

From *Canterbury Tales* through *Ten Little Indians*, putting strangers together in a strange place has been a stalwart and irresistible literary device. Here the pilgrims are lured to an island off the coast of Scotland by Eric, a sour innkeeper hoping to drum up some off-season business from among the many mainlanders who are “dreading Christmas.” He manages to collect Harry, “a military man, disciplined and tidy,” who “had been sad for almost as long as he could remember”; Jessica, an actress who is paid “vast sums . . . for praising toilet soap and tea-bags”; Anita, a disgruntled department-store manager; Ronald, a psychoanalyst whose wife and cleaning lady have simultaneously abandoned him; and Jon, a beautiful young man with golden hair.

Harry reflects that “all the people in the inn were in the throes of disappointment: that was why they were here.” But the dull gray sky and the indifferent sea do little to distract them from their private concerns, while ghosts, madness, and thoughts of murder seep in with the damp. This novel is not, however, either depressing or melodramatic: Alice Thomas Ellis's ironic sense of humor pokes up everywhere like crocuses in March. Eric, contemplating a rival pub down the coast, feels “the bewildered wrath of the simple, virtuous maiden, modestly conscious of her worth, who is rejected in favour of the painted, flouncing fire-ship, all empty promise and implicit hazard.” Finlay, the island man-of-



**THE INN AT
THE EDGE OF
THE WORLD**

by
Alice Thomas Ellis
Akadine Press/
Trafalgar Square,
187 pages, \$14.95

perhaps inform her broad grasp of human nature and the elusiveness of contentment. *The Inn at the Edge of the World* was originally published in Britain, where it won the 1991 Writers' Guild Award for Best Fiction. —*MARTHA SPAULDING*

Romantic regret is Anita Shreve's subject in this instantly captivating novel. Longing for a life not lived, a love they lost, haunts Thomas Janes, a celebrated poet when we first meet him, and Linda Fallon, a lesser poet who has suffered less. They meet again, unexpectedly, at a poetry reading in Toronto after an interval of twenty-four years. Clues to their past surface in their conversation. Names appear—Regina, Peter, Donny T.—and lines like “It was the most selfish moment of my life, Thomas. I can only think I must have wanted it

over. All of it” plant discoveries to come. The novel works backward through another unexpected meeting, in Kenya, years earlier, and finally to the moment when Linda walked into Thomas's class in a Massachusetts high school in a borrowed too-tight sweater and miniskirt. Fiction writers could go to school on Shreve's command of scene: the poetry conclave, an embassy party in Kenya, a confession to a Catholic priest. These scenes are or contain what the novelist Douglas Bauer, in a provocative new book, *The Stuff of Fiction: Advice on Craft* (University of Michigan Press), calls high events: “If we imagine ... this movement of narrative as the regular pulsing line on a

all-work, and a laconic woman known only as Finlay's sister-in-law (said to be a “selkie,” or seal person, and smelling strongly of fish), play consistently comic bit parts.

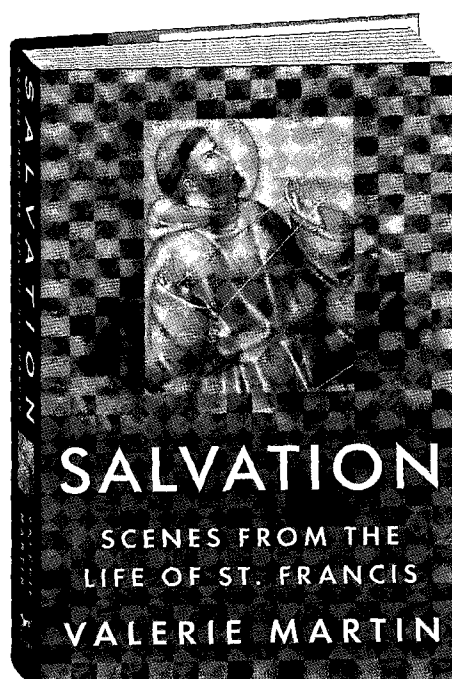
Ellis, the author of several novels, was in her youth a postulant and is today the mother of five—facts that per-



**THE LAST TIME
THEY MET**

by Anita Shreve
Little, Brown, 320
pages, \$24.95

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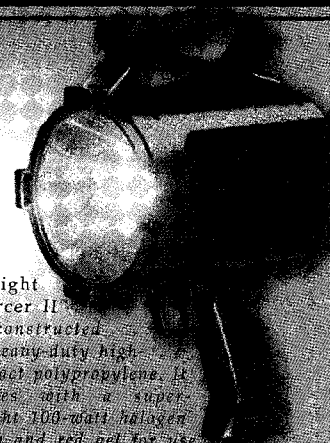
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heart monitor, then we know the line is altered from time to time by some emphatic occurrence that startles its steadiness and sends it, the narrative heartbeat, shooting up—shooting high. High event." In airport fiction events—acts of violence, sex—"have no long-lasting emotional consequences," Bauer writes. In fine fiction like *The Last Time They Met* events torture memory with possibility and loss. —JACK BEATTY



THE PEPPERED
MOTH

by Margaret
Drabble

Harcourt, 384
pages, \$25.00

Burrowing under the present and layering her story with metaphor, Margaret Drabble explores the persistence of the past, for better and for worse. From a very early age Bessie Bawtry, born at the start of the twentieth century in the filthy Yorkshire

coal-mining valley where her family has lived "since the end of the Ice Age," knows that "whatever the cost, she must escape or die." Drabble traces Bessie's life in an extraordinarily rich and lively tale of mothers and daughters and maiden aunts at once heartbreaking and hopeful. Although she leaves ugly Hammervale, intelligent, pretty, shy Bessie cannot escape the depression, "the infection of habit," passed matrilineally from generation to generation. Her patient husband, on his deathbed, remarks that "she's not the sweetheart that she used to be," and Chrissie, her daughter, tries unsuccessfully to remember a time when her mother was not bitter and contemptuous.

It is painful to learn, in her forthright afterword, that Drabble based Bessie on her mother, to whom she dedicates the book; but, amazingly, she probes the despair that accompanies attachment to those who are extremely difficult without rendering the novel itself depressing. Relieved by Chrissie, Chrissie's energetic and loving daughter, Faro, and a full and varied array of minor characters over three generations, together with a detailed examination of the artifacts that come with them, this book fairly bounces. Its zest derives in large part from the perfectly sustained tone, which expresses humor without

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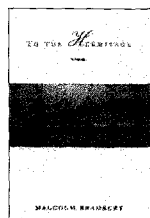
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poking fun, and deep regret without sentimentality. —CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

Malcolm Bradbury's last novel (he died in November) is a thoroughly encyclopedic undertaking. Not only does it show signs of extensive scholarship but its style proves more befitting a reference book than a work of fiction, filling in the blanks rather than creating suggestive voids. Here Bradbury wrote by a process of literary accumulation, using words like bricks and mortar to build a solid fortress of informational prose inhabited by historical characters (Voltaire, Potemkin, Catherine the Great) along with familiar modern types (a temperamental diva, a wisecracking American professor). Given his subject—the efforts of a group of contemporary scholars and artists to create a new version of Diderot's all-encompassing *Encyclopedia*—Bradbury's fictional cataloging is perhaps to be expected. But this does not make it any less ponderous. The author was England's most famous creative-writing teacher (his students included Kazuo Ishiguro and Ian McEwan), and in this novel he was in a pedantic mood, jovially lecturing the reader on such topics as Enlightenment philosophy, Russian history, and Swedish social democracy. The book's chapters alternate between a rendering of Diderot's tutorial mission to the court of Catherine the Great and the imaginary Diderot Project, a 1993 re-creation of that expedition led by a Swedish professor.

The historical chapters prove the more engrossing, delivering a satirical take on the Age of Enlightenment which suggests that vanity, realpolitik, and erotic impulse had a lot more to do with its great achievements than any unfettered flowering of human reason. Cameo appearances by Voltaire and Catherine are especially sharp, the former cast as a preening careerist, the latter as an overworked chief executive trying to keep the lid on a fractious nation. Diderot, meanwhile, is an amiably shambolic character who never realizes that his attempt to provide an exhaustive account of the human in-



TO THE
HERMITAGE
by Malcolm
Bradbury
The Overlook Press,
498 pages, \$27.95

tellect is doomed from the outset. Less successful are the contemporary chapters, told in the voice of a British novelist who, like Diderot, always seems to be one step behind the action. Although Bradbury's jabs at contemporary academia are occasionally funny, they are hardly groundbreaking. And his view of post-Communist Russia is cursory—it is no accident that the characters spend more time on their Baltic ferry than in the streets of St. Petersburg. It is difficult to know exactly what Bradbury is getting at in these chapters. Is it that modern scholars are more concerned with their own reputations than with their subject matter? Or perhaps that we are no more enlightened than our predecessors? Whatever the answer, it hardly seems worth all the scaffolding and heavy lifting needed to create those sturdy pillars of prose. —STEPHEN AMIDON

The subject of this ambitious, literary novel is the Donner party, which in the winter of 1846–1847 was trapped in the Sierra Nevada. Famously, members of this group of overland emigrants resorted to cannibalism, but their story has captured the American imagination less for its ghoulish aspects than for its terrible moral ambiguities. Most iconic tales of disaster and survival involve soldiers, adventurers, and other unattached individuals. The Donner party was a community of families, a community that fragmented when confronted with peril; and in its plight altruism and Christian responsibility contested brutally with love and the bonds of blood. In choosing this subject, James D. Houston has given himself an opportunity to explore complex motives and characters, and his writerly skills are a match for the task. He draws a finely shaded portrait of his history-based protagonist, James Reed, who heroically saves his family and much of the party, but whose pride and compassion were in large measure responsible for the disaster. Houston imaginatively and deftly embellishes the “Trail Notes” of James Reed's daughter, Patty, who recollected as an old woman her experiences as a child. (Summoning this precocious and forthright witness gave Houston great material to work with: when her mother was forced

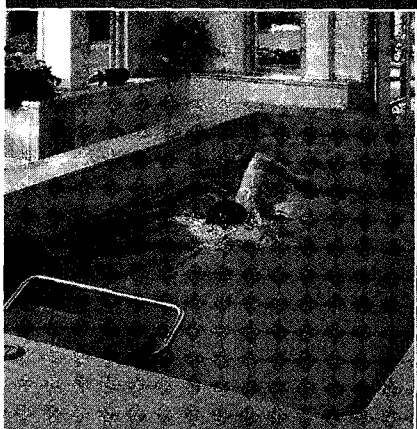


SNOW MOUNTAIN
PASSAGE
by James D.
Houston
Knopf, 304 pages,
\$24.00

to abandon Patty in order to trek through the mountains to bring back help, the starved eight-year-old said, “Well, mother, if you never see me again, you do the best you can.”) He has a sure sense of place (I spent part of three summers hiking in the country around what is now Donner Pass; Houston precisely depicts its granite slopes and the subtle shift from the foothills to the Sierra Nevada). And most important, he has a clear-eyed view of humanity's heart of darkness: a few people acted with enormous courage and selflessness (two of them were rewarded by being hunted down and killed for food), but the behavior of most other members of the party ranged from feckless to mean to evil. Yet this work of fiction can't match George Stewart's 1936 history, *Ordeal by Hunger*—the most terrifying book I've read. —BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

In the 1960s and 1970s a group of enormously influential historians—most notably Philippe Ariès and Lawrence Stone—argued that pre-industrial families were essentially different from the modern “sentimental” family. According to this view, the pre-modern family was rigidly “patriarchal,” and children were viewed mainly as assets; hence the deep bonds of love and care between parent and child which we now associate with the “nuclear family” were essentially nonexistent. In this elegant, persuasive book, based largely on historians' meticulous scholarship of the past two decades (including the author's minute investigations of medieval and early-modern German families), Steven Ozment presents a very different picture. He argues that the relationship between spouses was far more cooperative and loving, and the affection of parents for their children was far fiercer, than Ariès and his disciples would have it. In an example of scholarship confirming common sense (and refuting the highly theoretical work of once trendy historians), Ozment concludes that “such high qualities prove to be specific to family life itself and not to

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ANCESTORS: THE LOVING FAMILY IN OLD EUROPE

by Steven Ozment
Harvard University Press, 162 pages,
\$29.95 / \$14.50

often seemed to be the point of much of their scholarship. *Ancestors* amounts to an eloquent—and academically unfashionable—condemnation of those historians who approach an earlier age “with an eye only to determining where that age stands on some burning present-day issue.” —BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

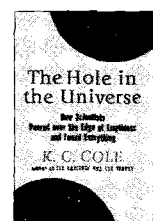
On page 91 of this book K. C. Cole advises the reader, somewhat plaintively, “Don’t try to grasp all of this at once.” The injunction, and its reiteration elsewhere (“I urge the reader not to worry if this doesn’t make complete sense”), might strike some as authorial dereliction. But any writer who has ever grappled with Cole’s subject will know better, and will spot such warnings as badges of integrity. Cole has set out to describe for lay readers a world that scrambles the comprehension even of its most adept theoreticians: the world of modern physics.

Cole, a veteran science reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and the author of *The Universe and the Teacup*, a praised paean to mathematics, has here chosen for her conceit an intellectual history of nothing. This ranges widely, before she is done, from the blood contest over the quantity zero, whose millennium-long fight for acceptance as a regular digit was won astonishingly late in Western mathematics, to Zen Buddhist teachings on the potential of the emptied mind. Cole approaches this dense topic through a chronicle of the void, the vacuum, whether it be within atoms or between galaxies. This avenue is profitable for two reasons. First, a great deal of scientific speculation on the nature of matter has hinged on the question of the not-matter around it. Until Einstein showed that light needed no tangible medium through which to travel, theorists filled the vacuum with “ether”—the “en-

time and place.” Ariès’s more immoderate followers anachronistically caricatured the pre-modern family as hierarchical, emotionally crippled, and conformist; in fact, criticizing “superordinate and subordinate relations” and celebrating the liberated modern ethos

fant terrible” of substances, as Einstein put it. It was subsequently banished. The tale of what happened next provides the second, and greatest, utility for Cole’s enterprise. Essentially, ether has been resurrected, in a different and far more mysterious form. No longer is it an aspic in which to float the universe. No: it is a materially empty void, but a void increasingly recognized as animate and fecund—“infinitely creative,” in Cole’s words. “All it needs is the energy to do what it’s naturally inclined to do: proliferate wildly in every conceivable form.” In fact, borrowed energy “comes to life” as particles (and antiparticles) in the void.

Cole’s account of this generative space takes her (and us) on a civilian’s tour to the front lines of modern physics—into the phantasmagoric realms of superstring theory and M-theory and black holes. In due course Cole tackles the universe’s origins, shape, and—insofar as we can speculate—possible fates. But she never strays far from her point: that “the geom-



THE HOLE IN THE UNIVERSE: HOW SCIENTISTS PEERED OVER THE EDGE OF EMPTINESS AND FOUND EVERYTHING
by K. C. Cole
Harcourt, 286 pages, \$24.00

etry of nothing may be the cause of everything that is, as well as everything that happens, in the universe.” Before she gets through exploring this vacuum, it has come to seem a membrane between the tangible and the abstract, in which the latter can give birth to the former in an instant or absorb it back again—and, in any instant, apparently does. Cole’s breezy style is complemented by a bedrock respect for attribution. This is a survey, after all, and her eagerness throughout to credit her sources makes it a particularly useful entryway to the rest of the genre. At first the conceit of *The Hole in the Universe*—combining the history of zero (a mathematical nothing) with that of the vacuum (a physical nothing)—may strike the reader as mongrel, a grab-bag conflation. But when we grasp that Cole’s protagonist, her void, is the quintessence in which the mathematical explodes from a spark of energy into the physical world we know, the organization of her book becomes apparent. —RUSS RYMER

THE NONCONFORMIST

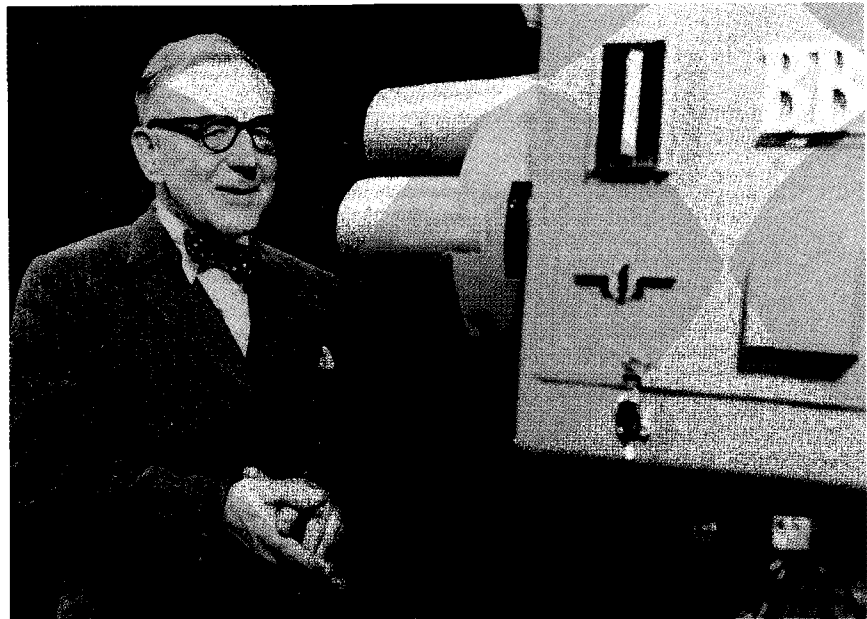
*Our author reconsiders
A.J.P. Taylor and the question his
work provokes: Is history just
one damned thing after another?*

BY PAUL KENNEDY

.....

Anyone living in England during the 1950s and 1960s who was politically alert knew about A.J.P. (Alan) Taylor. He was that diminutive bow-tied Oxford academic who, with Canon Collins and Michael Foot, marched in protests organized by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. He was one of the first of the British “telly dons,” who could stand in front of the camera and pontificate without notes about virtually anything. (One of my favorite Taylor legends has him arriving at the studio in 1953 to give a talk about Napoleon, only to be told of Stalin’s death and asked to lecture instead on the life of a very different dictator—which he did, in his unflappable way.) He was the only person who could get Oxford undergraduates out of bed early in the morning—and in vast numbers, to sit in the chilly Examination Schools and listen to him talk (for exactly fifty-five minutes and again without notes) on modern European history.

Alan Taylor wrote one of the most enduring works of diplomatic history, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918* (1954, and never out of print), yet he also wrote potboilers that swiftly faded from sight and use. His regular opinion pieces for *The Guardian*, the *Daily Herald*, and Lord Beaverbrook’s newspaper the *Sunday Express*—polemical articles about why the Germans were inherently bad, and why the Americans would plunge the world into a nuclear war, and why Whitehall bureaucrats were ruining Britain—infuriated his academic colleagues, who ensured that he never received a professorship (a far more exalted position in Britain than in the United States) or a public honor. Whether they resented him because of his radical views, or because he wrote for a middlebrow readership, or because he was so well known to the British pub-



lic, or because seemingly no other historian except J. H. Plumb in those days made so much money from his writings is unimportant. He was a burr under the saddle, a pain in the neck, a “troublemaker”—the very title that Kathleen Burk uses in this new examination of Taylor’s life and writings.

Above all, Alan Taylor was the author of that brilliant and unnerving book *The Origins of the Second World War*, which appeared in 1961. It rocked the academic world and also sent shock waves into the political arena, because of its seeming implications for Cold War policy. For forty-plus years undergraduates around the world taking twentieth-century-history classes have found it hard to avoid grappling with the “Taylor thesis”—that is, his argument that World War II in Europe was caused not so much by a megalomaniacal Adolf Hitler as by the misguided policies of Britain and France.

Taylor argued that Hitler’s geopolitical ambitions (at least until the invasion of the Soviet Union) were similar to those of traditional German statesmen, including the Weimar Republic’s Gustav Stresemann—though Hitler had better gambling nerves. When he came to power, Hitler inherited vast potential. By the twentieth century Germany’s large population and industrial might gave the country a natural pre-eminence in west-central Europe, and the Versailles settle-

ment of 1919 was an artificial absurdity that was bound to unravel. This unraveling could have been done rationally, as in the early stages of British and

French appeasement over the Rhineland, Germany’s *anschluss* with Austria, and so on; but after Munich, in 1938, it was increasingly bungled. Having appeased Berlin over more-contestable

territorial issues, the British changed their stance and decided to fight over Danzig and the Polish Corridor, where the German case for revision was stronger. The result, Taylor maintained, was a war in Europe that nobody wanted and that personally dismayed Hitler. World War II was simply an accident: Hitler never imagined that the democracies would actually go to war over Poland, especially because London and Paris could do almost nothing to defend the Poles. Such things happen from time to time; and if the Americans and the Russians continued to jostle each other in the 1960s over Berlin or Cuba, another accident would blow the world to smithereens. All Taylor was doing was retelling this tale of folly, in wonderful, lucid, captivating prose.

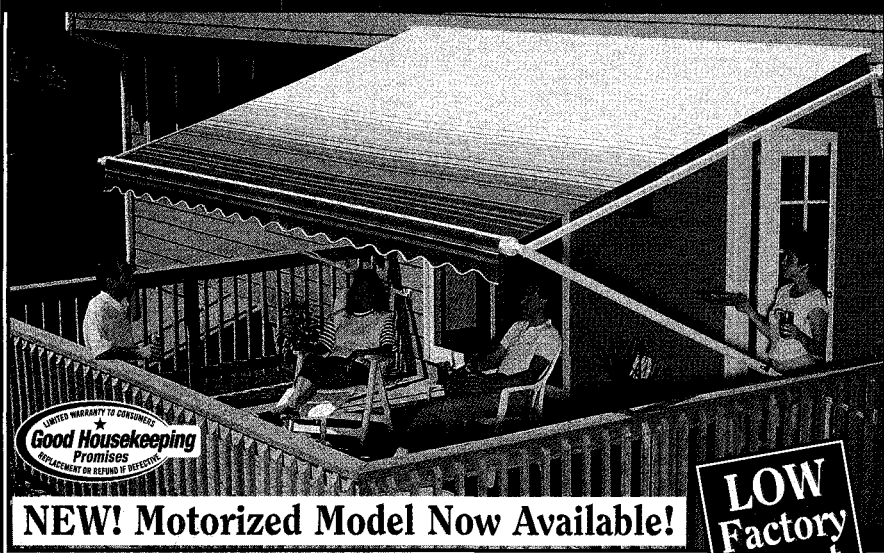
How much of this was tongue-in-cheek is hard to know. Taylor was certainly no pro-Nazi; he had campaigned against appeasement in the 1930s, and described Winston Churchill as “the saviour of his country.” Some fifteen

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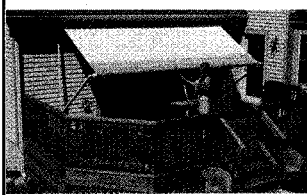
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years before *Origins* he had written a work—*The Course of German History* (1945)—that was profoundly anti-German; the book demonstrated, Taylor modestly noted in his preface to the revised edition (coincidentally also 1961), “that it was no more a mistake for the German people to end up with Hitler than it is an accident when a river flows into the sea, though the process is, I daresay, unpleasant for the fresh water.” That neo-Nazis in Germany welcomed *Origins* must have caused Taylor only amusement; to say that Hitler was no worse than Stresemann was the same as saying that Stresemann and all other Germans were no better than Hitler. And, somewhat like the Soviet leadership of the time, he was totally against German reunification. (It was not until after Willy Brandt knelt on Polish soil, many years later, that Taylor’s Germanophobe attitudes moderated.)

Still, the surprising portrayal of German policies in *Origins* was pretty shocking stuff. Taylor had assaulted orthodoxies on all fronts. In 1961 the British firmly believed that World War II had been “the good war,” a Manichaean clash between light and darkness in which Hitler was the true Beelzebub, whereas the British nation, standing alone under the leadership of Churchill (whose own extraordinarily popular history of these events differs markedly from Taylor’s), had remained true to the causes of democracy and decency. To imply that the war was some sort of mistake or accident was heresy. Moreover, Taylor had not only attacked the honored past but also, implicitly, questioned the contemporary meaning of the Western alliance in the midst of the Cold War. After all, Hugh Trevor-Roper and others among Taylor’s critics asked, if it would have been wise for the democracies to recognize Germany’s natural hegemony over Central Europe in the 1930s, was it not also sensible to allow the Soviet Union in 1961 to be hegemonic in Berlin? To approve yesterday’s appeasement, as Taylor seemed to be doing, weakened the West’s stance for the future.

Besides, Taylor’s critics asserted,

there was something both morally and methodologically unsettling about his preference for the accident and the contingent in history. If World War II was like an unintended road crash (an analogy Taylor used), where was the place for blaming Hitler and his noxious creed of racism and aggression? More important, where was the space for profound forces and for overall trends? For the roles of ideology, domestic politics, culture, national traditions and myths, and economic forces? Was all of history a series of Jacques Tati-style accidents? This was the kernel of the Oxford historian T. W. Mason's powerful attack on Taylor for trivializing the innate evil and aggressiveness of National Socialism (and thereby downplaying the likelihood, rather than the happenstance, of a conflict with the democracies).

The only "solution" open to this regime of the structural tensions and crises produced by dictatorship and rearmament was more dictatorship and more rearmament, then expansion, then war and terror, then plunder and enslavement ... A war for the plunder of manpower and materials lay square in the dreadful logic of German economic development under National Socialist rule.

In his reply Taylor conceded that he may not have emphasized the profound forces, but he asserted that too many historians focused on those forces because they didn't like to do the detailed work—add up the pennies, Taylor advised, and they will soon become pounds; "I prefer detail to generalisations"; and so on. This was not a persuasive reply. In fact, in the context of the other historical debates that were raging at Oxford and elsewhere in the 1960s, it seemed a breathtakingly banal attitude. These were the years when Fernand Braudel's magnificent *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* was showing that history could be understood at three separate but interconnected levels; when E. P. Thompson's classic *The Making of the English Working Class* revolutionized the writing of socio-political history; when Fritz Fischer's works on German war aims in World War I sought to connect the deep social

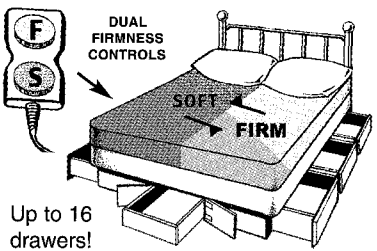
and economic forces that were impelling expansion in Wilhelmine Germany with the high policies being pursued by Berlin; when Arthur Marwick was developing the study of "total war and social change." And here, on the other hand, was Taylor, a sort of Athanasius contra Mundum, stating that he preferred details to generalizations.

Before we dig deeper into these themes, let us know more about Taylor himself, especially as Kathleen Burk describes him. (Burk's, by the way, is one in a surprisingly large number of Taylor biographies: Adam Sisman's extremely thorough study, *A.J.P. Taylor: A Biography* [1994] is one.) Born in 1906 into privileged circumstances (Taylor's father was a wealthy Lancashire textile businessman who indulged his son with a car when Alan was an undergraduate at Oxford), Taylor also inherited a family tradition of political radicalism. His dislike of the British "establishment" (a term he helped to popularize) lasted until the end of his life, and probably intensified because of the many professional snubs he received. Flirting briefly with the Communist Party in the 1920s, he then lodged within the left wing of British Labour for the rest of his days. None of this leftism was for Taylor incompatible with his appreciation of fine food and wine, his holiday homes, and his obsession with the earnings from his writing (he seems to have haggled over every royalty and fee, and many of the newspaper articles he poured out were clearly written only for the money). He liked the company of women, and his three marriages (especially the first) were riven with quarrels and betrayals. He had some good friends, such as Malcolm Muggeridge and the impish press baron Lord Beaverbrook, but he made many enemies and rarely if ever forgave a wrong or a slight.

Reviews of Burk's book in Britain last summer focused heavily on those personal details, but few of them seem pertinent—except the lasting influence of Taylor's northern, radical roots. This was a world view that might baffle most American politicians today, because of its curious combination of

ideological principles. It suspected large defense spending and opposed foreign-policy adventures and overseas obligations, unless they were for a radical cause, such as supporting the Republican (left-wing) side during the Spanish civil war. It favored world democracy and the League of Nations. It mistrusted class privilege and, despite its Nonconformist origins, was cool to religion. It opposed large government when that favored the ruling elites of the nineteenth century, but came steadily to advocate substantial social-welfare and education support for all Britons as the poverty of the lower classes grew more obvious and disconcerting in the first half of the twentieth century. It was independent-minded and quirky. It preferred being in opposition to being in power. Not for nothing did Taylor declare that his favorite among his writings was *The Trouble Makers: Dissent Over British Foreign Policy 1792–1939* (1957), which examined radical criticism of the establishment's handling of external affairs from the French Revolution to the crises of the 1930s. Taylor liked dissent; moreover, he believed to the end of his days that his own dissent had been consistent, whereas his critics never ceased to accuse him of deliberately trying to shock readers, of frivolousness, of setting off firecrackers just to make a noise, of changing his mind whenever it suited him. Even after his death, in September of 1990, historians such as John Keegan and A. L. Rowse charged him with everything from contempt for England's national traditions to a lack of seriousness.

Somewhere in Taylor's tangled, idiosyncratic, and contradictory character, I suspect, lie clues to his curiously split approach to causation in history. To assume that he never paid attention to the profound forces that changed our world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is simply wrong. That he wrote *The Trouble Makers* and that Richard Cobden (the nineteenth-century British crusader for free trade, disarmament, and moralism in foreign policy) was his great hero indicate that he believed in the power of ideas to change politics—just as he believed



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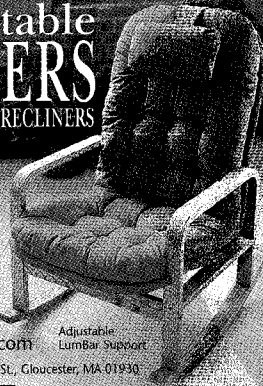


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(at least for a while) that the CND's protest marches could change the British government's nuclear strategy. Even more important was the attention Taylor paid in his writings to the deep shifts in balances of power from the 1860s to the 1930s. In his introduction to *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* is a superb analysis (complete with many statistical tables) of alterations in the demographic, industrial, and military balances among the Great Powers from 1848 to 1914. It was then necessary, Taylor wrote, to "translate these economic figures into political terms." He argued that its great economic growth after 1870 gave Germany the means to dominate Europe, but it had to do so soon (before 1920), or the even greater growth of America and Russia would have blocked that option. There was little evidence of the contingent or the accidental here.

Taylor picked up this argument in the second chapter of *The Origins of the Second World War* in an analysis that is worth reproducing in extenso.

However democratic and pacific Germany might become [after 1919], she remained by far the greatest Power on the continent of Europe; with the disappearance of Russia, more so than before. She was greatest in population—65 million against 40 million in France, the only other substantial Power. Her preponderance was greater still in the economic resources of coal and steel which in modern times together made up power. At the moment in 1919, Germany was down-and-out. The immediate problem was German weakness; but given a few years of "normal" life, it would again become the problem of German strength. More than this, the old balance of power, which formerly did something to restrain Germany, had broken down. Russia had withdrawn; Austria-Hungary had vanished. Only France and Italy remained, both inferior in man-power and still more in economic resources, both exhausted by the war. If events followed their course in the old "free" way, nothing could prevent the Germans from overshadowing Europe, even if they did not plan to do so.

Yet, paradoxically, the greater part of both *Mastery* and *Origins* tells a story with few references to these basic forces and instead focuses on week-by-week and sometimes day-by-day diplomatic

jugglings, misunderstandings, and personal foibles. To some degree this can be explained by the fact that Taylor relied heavily on diplomatic documents, which are not especially helpful in making a link between a particular day's policy and broader causes. On the contrary, a diplomatic telegram is much likelier to emphasize the immediate, the tactical, the particular, while its euphemistic language can disguise great passion and ambition. Thus the broad balance-of-power shifts that Taylor covers in the early sections of his books remain separate from the dazzling diplomatic narratives that follow; and the day-to-day events come to seem autotelic, to be understood and read on their own terms. Even so, other historians (I think in particular of James Joll, in his seminal 1968 inaugural lecture at the London School of Economics, "1914: The Unspoken Assumptions") have taught us how to read diplomatic documents in a more nuanced way, and therefore Taylor's sources cannot fully explain his contradictory position about causation. For example, 200 pages after assuring the reader of *Origins* that the first world war "caused" the second, he wrote, "The war of 1939, far from being premeditated, was a mistake, the result on both sides of diplomatic blunders." Statesmen, he also asserted, are "too absorbed by events to follow a preconceived plan." And on the final page he wrote, "Hitler may have projected a great war all along; yet it seems from the record that he became involved in war through launching on 29 August a diplomatic manoeuvre which he ought to have launched on 28 August." It is hard to think of a less satisfactory explanation for the coming of World War II in Europe.

Still, it may be too easy to conclude that Taylor was simply intellectually confused or carelessly inconsistent—that he wanted his history both ways, the predetermined and the accidental, the broad trends and the individual maneuverings. Perhaps it would be more useful to see this tension in his writings as reflecting a natural dialogue that exists in the study of all history, and in many related disciplines as well—and that he somehow exhibited that dichotomy more

publicly, more blatantly, than most. A child of the twentieth century, he was immensely affected by World War I, the emergence of communism and fascism, the Great Depression, the decline of the British Empire, the ordeals of World War II and the Holocaust, the rise of the superpowers, the nuclear age. Who of his generation could not be? This was a world turned on its head, a century more turbulent, perhaps, than any since the sixteenth, when different profound forces also upset the traditional order of things.

Yet Taylor, who always said that history was "fun," was also fascinated by the contingent and the personal—by the warped personality of Kaiser Wilhelm II, by Lenin's historic journey in a sealed train to the Finland Station to join the Bolshevik Revolution, by the premature death of Stresemann, by the coincidence of the banking crisis of 1931 and the Manchurian Crisis, by the failure of the German generals to remove Hitler in 1938, by the Soviet and American intelligence errors of 1941, by Stalin's mysterious lapse in not vetoing United Nations action in Korea, by Anthony Eden's lack of realism over Suez. How can all these be fitted into any grand theory of historical causation? The answer is they cannot, because of course they exist at another level of historical unfolding.

Taylor's failing (if that is the proper word) was that instead of grappling in a thoughtful way with this problem of the general and the particular in history—as, for example, his contemporary E. H. Carr attempted in *What Is History?* (1961)—he dismissed his critics with trite remarks about adding up pennies in order to make pounds. By this evasion he saved himself some hard thinking but earned—or deepened—his reputation as a gadfly, which is a shame. Yet this tension belongs to elsewhere and everywhere, including to our own age. When historians half a century from now look back on the years, say, 1980 to 2000, how will they grapple with the relationships between broad trends and particular occurrences in our generation? Between the steady economic and social weakening and then collapse of the USSR and the

ANSWERS TO THE MARCH PUZZLER

T	R	U	M	P	E	T	B	A	S	S	O	O	N	P
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I	F	E	O	C	A	R	I	N	A	F	L	U	G	E
N	E	T	E	P	I	P	N	A	P	N	R	O	H	L
O	R	S	A	X	D	I	D	G	E	R	I	D	O	O

"March Theme"

Clues: A. POR(TEN)T; HELL; F(O)UR; B + ON + CO; HUM + OR; P(DAN + O; FLEET (double def.); FOR + T(h)E; NO(I)SE B. C(E)NOME; LEECH (hidden); HEM + P; PEN + A + LI(Z)E; CU(PCA)KE (cap anag.); IDIOT BOXES (anag.); A + P + ACE C. FAT + AL; CHARM (anag.); EUROPE (hidden); SO + ON; AN(GR)Y; CHI(R)P D. SA(LO)NS; S(H + O)OS; NOAH (homophone of *know a*); A(B + B + O)T; BA(I)TS; F(EMU)R; D + INNER; FE(R)N; POL(ice c)AR E. DO(MIN)G; CLIP (double def.); CORN (double def.); REGUL + ATE (*Luger rev.*); B(O + LET)US; DOUGH (homophone); C + ROPE; JO(U + L)E

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FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS

It won't be found in the Bible. As borne out by critical analysis, the Gospels of the New Testament are sloppy history, giving a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Frankly, most Christians don't seem to care—idealism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides. It consists of 113 notes taken down by Thomas of things he heard Jesus say that perplexed him. Thus the notes probably have not suffered alteration and were written down at the time heard—the best kind of source for a history.

Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. He provides all the text of *Thomas* with comments to build a narrative of the historical Jesus. This Jesus differs radically from the Jesus Christ of the Bible. This *actual* Jesus based his teaching on the Epicurean philosophy, not Judaism, admonishing disciples, "Do not tell a lie and whatever you hate do not do it," instead of fasting, praying, almsgiving, and obeying food laws. Thomas never notes him mentioning the devil, demons, or hell. But the most radical difference is that Epicureanism also shaped his thought that God and Caesar are man-made authorities, and that one's ultimate authority should be oneself. Hannah's book is 321 pgs., pbk., \$12 postpaid. Please order by check from:

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flawed but critical characters of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin? Between the high-tech revolution of Microsoft and the Internet and a sex scandal that weakened the American President most capable of articulating the significance of that new landscape? Between the rise and fall of UN peace-enforcement in the 1990s and Jesse Helms's resistance to U.S. participation in such actions, the especial nastiness of Slobodan Milosevic, and the breakdown of communications one night in Mogadishu? Scholars fifty years hence will obviously have a clearer view of today's broad global forces than we have, but where will they rank such personalities as Pope John Paul II and Margaret Thatcher? Are the latter to be Hegelian "world-historical figures" or merely incidental to the unfolding story of our ever modernizing, ever globalizing planet? Since none of us knows what will happen next year (the death of a world leader, perhaps, or a nuclear war over Kashmir), how can we deny the power of the contingent and the unforeseen?

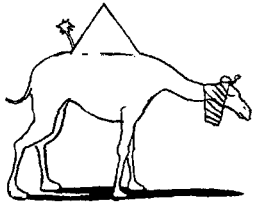
Taylor was familiar with many of the historians who had confronted this problem of assigning causation—Gibbon, Burke, Carlyle, Macaulay, Marx and Engels, Lewis Namier—and recognized, surely, how serious and tricky the issue is. But he declined to advance any fully reasoned explication of where he came out on this problem, or of whether his position changed over time. He will long be remembered for his studies in diplomatic history, and even more so for his explosive work on the origins of World War II. But this unorthodox contrarian will not stand in the pantheon of those scholars, from Thucydides onward, who have insisted that the historian's task is not only to retell what happened in the past but also to try to explain why things happened the way they did.

If that sounds like harsh criticism of a gifted scholar, it is doubly so coming

from this author's pen. During the first decade or so of my academic life I was devoted to the Taylorian view of diplomatic and political history. As an embarrassingly youthful twenty-year-old who had received a book prize in history at the University of Newcastle during graduation in 1966, I chose to spend the money on Taylor's *Mastery*, Robinson and Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians* (1961), and W. L. Langer's *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890–1902* (1935), perhaps the three classic texts of diplomatic history. It would be many years before my reading of Braudel, Carr, Geoffrey Barraclough, William McNeill, and Eric Hobsbawm pushed me to think of history in broader and more methodologically complex ways. This is, for most of us, a natural progression. A doctorate compels most of us to be detailed and narrow, and to carve out our own specialties, and tenure committees rarely like boldness. Later, when our jobs are safe, we can be synthetic, and generalize. But something in Taylor pushed him to become more skeptical of searching for deeper meanings, and more persuaded that the pennies added up to pounds.

To those of us writing and teaching history today, the same weighty challenge of assigning causation remains. The general reader and the college student alike deserve to be stimulated and drawn into this unending debate—unending because the serious study of humankind's story will always need the particular and the general, the contingent and the profound. Providing both is easier said than done. In fact, it has never been "done" perfectly. Relating small details to large forces in history remains a maddeningly chicken-and-egg, squaring-the-circle, hedgehog-and-fox exercise that tests even the finest scholars, none of whom will get a straight A for the effort. But to evade, as Taylor did, is no solution at all. The least we can do is try. ▀

The Atlantic Monthly (ISSN 0276-9077) is published monthly except for a combined issue in July/August by The Atlantic Monthly Group, 77 N. Washington St., Boston, MA 02114 (617-854-7700). Periodicals postage paid at Boston, MA, Toronto, Ont., and additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription queries: Atlantic Customer Care, Box 37585, Boone, IA 50037-0585 (or call 800-234-2411). Privacy: We make portions of our customer list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services we believe you may enjoy. If you do not want to receive this information, please write to the Customer Care address above. Advertising and Circulation: 200 Madison Ave., 20th floor, NY, NY 10016 (646-695-8500). Subscriptions: one year \$17.94 in the U.S. and poss.; add \$8.00 in Canada, includes GST (123209926); add \$15.00 elsewhere. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement 0261327. Back issues: send \$7.50 per copy to The Atlantic, Back Issues, 1900 Industrial Park Dr., Federalburg, MD 21632 (or call 410-754-8219). Vol. 287, No. 4, April 2001. Copyright © 2001, by The Atlantic Monthly Group. All rights reserved. Postmaster: Send address changes to Atlantic Address Change, Box 37585, Boone, IA 50037-0585.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Mystery Word

In this puzzle each of the seven unclued entries is a phrase defining a word. The definitions may be oblique. Each of the seven answers, when apprehended as we intend, will yield a letter. Those seven letters can be arranged to spell our Mystery Word, which may be entered on the blanks below the grid. Clue answers include nine proper nouns; 38 Across is uncommon, 6 Down is a variant form, and 31 Down is archaic.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 113.

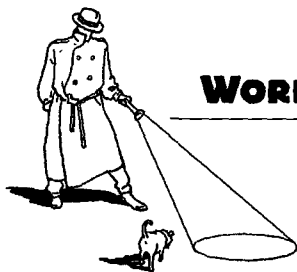
ACROSS

1. (4,3)
8. A little life and energy in a dress (6)
13. Not even affected by narcotics after the first (6)
14. Small closed room with great shower (5)
15. (3,4)
16. One getting kicks with jokes, ultimately? (7)
18. (5,2)
20. Enjoy a banquet, adopting a girl's name (5)
21. Employing speech, take part in a revolution with Jaeger's kin (4)
23. Colored foil material spread for drying (6)
25. (4,3)
28. Suffer after bad back, a little bit (6)
29. Hooker in a musical of Gershwin getting married (4)
30. Chum stripped before the Spanish dances (5)
33. (4,3)
35. Sailors at last in the raw (7)
37. (4,3)
38. Norm, for example, returned to get plastered? (5)
39. Mercenary grabs one of some vessels (6)
40. English author's grave mentioned (6)
41. (3,4)

DOWN

1. Drunk beaten while clutching Old Testament (8)
2. Chopper changing its front rotating mechanism (7)
3. Alien probe badly failing to admit intervention (10)
4. Reversing track, immobilize English highwayman (6)
5. Feudal lord's retainer is carrying a strange article around (7)
6. Middle Easterner was in a hurry, splitting Roman couple (5)
7. Uncle occupies network bars (4)
8. American soldier in Britain, thanks to radical trouble-maker (8)
9. Urged and pleaded after the start (5)
10. New issue of a book torn, with messy rip in it (7)
11. Scottish peak, in land on a bight (5)
12. Name for a guy in a whirl, so we hear (5)
17. Want beer, or nuts floating (10)
19. Very unhappy about soft drinks (5)
22. Make a monarch upset Nero, then (8)
24. Dumbbell he located in Delaware advertisements (8)
25. Praise falsely and with less gloss (7)
26. Lunatic pursued and seized (7)
27. Lug gems secretly? (7)
29. Bargain inside is for models (6)
30. High bird's wails (5)
31. Around noon, Utah jockeys lose a derby? (5)
32. U.S. Open champ when turning five (5)
34. Picasso beginning to paint a blue lake orange (5)
36. Catcher hit after top of third (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

This column appeared in *The Atlantic* for the first time in February—just a few weeks before the current issue went to press. It introduced readers to the idea of “word fugitives”—empty mental spaces that await words to fill them—and invited anyone interested to propose words sought by two readers of the magazine’s Web site, where Word Fugitives began. So that correspondents will have time to weigh in, we will publish responses to those queries in the June issue. In the meantime, here are two further exchanges adapted from the Web site, and two new calls for words.

AMY MARSMAN, of New York, New York, wrote, “I am interested in either learning or coining a word that emphasizes the positive aspects of selfishness. *Selfishness* has such negative connotations, yet looking out for one’s health and well-being first and foremost is considered emotionally and physically sound. Why should that have negative connotations? I hear a lot of people apologize for this enlightened view, because they have to use the nasty word *selfish* to describe themselves.”

When this note was published in *Atlantic Unbound*, a number of people seem to have stayed up late writing responses to it, including treatises that quoted or paraphrased such thinkers as Adam Smith, John Maynard Keynes, Abraham Maslow, S. I. Hayakawa, and, most often, Ayn Rand. Spencer Star, of Emeryville, California, wrote, “You might call yourself a *utilitarian*, though that term is usually associated with Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill.” Austin Peterson, of Evanston, Wyoming, wrote, “Instead of our being concerned about another person’s accusation that we are selfish, which drives us to justify our behavior with a substitute word, why not rely on the old-fashioned word *responsible*?”

And top honors go to Ann Franchi, of Eaton Park, Florida, for her suggestion of *selfism* and *selfist*. These words appear in unabridged dictionaries, but they are heard and seen only rarely; when they do appear in print, they are likely to carry roughly the meaning that Amy Marsman is seeking. Despite a proliferation of words like *racism* and *sexist*, *speciesism* and *ageist*, the suffixes *-ism* and *-ist* for the most part have neutral connotations. A student radical I knew in my college days, explaining why he consid-



ered himself a *Trotskyist*, not a *Trotskyite*, once told me sternly, “It’s like the difference between a *socialist* and a *socialite*.” It’s not, of course—but no one who hears that seems to have trouble ever again remembering which term is pejorative.

RALPH W. MILLIGAN, of Lake Charles, Louisiana; Marion Greenman, of Oak Park, Illinois; and Jack Wilson, of Wayland, Massachusetts, all separately sought one particular word—a pretty good hint that the lack of it is widely felt. As Milligan explained the word fugitive in question, “The English language desperately needs a word for an offspring who is an adult. My eldest daughter is still my daughter, but she is certainly no longer my child.”

Michael Fischer, of Minneapolis,

Minnesota, responded with a list: “For the pedantic, there are *progeny* and *scions*; for insurance purposes, there is *descendants*; and if you want to be biblical, there is *begats*.” Carolyn Roosevelt, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, reported, more flippantly, “My cousin calls her grown progeny *my adults*.” And Dan Dillon, of Chicago, Illinois, thought to coin *unchildren*.

Top honors, though, are due Charles Harrington Elster, of San Diego, California, a professional wordsmith and a vice-president of the Society for the Preservation of English Language and Literature. “Assuming the child has left home,” he wrote, “how about *offsprung*?”

NOW PAUL M. KINTNER, of Hendersonville, North Carolina, writes, “We need a word to describe the act of having tongue-in-cheek wit taken literally—a particularly exasperating experience.”

AND HARRIET REISEN, of Arlington, Massachusetts, writes, “The verb to *dial* in reference to the telephone seems antiquated already, and it will only become more obscure in origin as rotary phones go from scarcity to extinction. We need a good neologism to replace it.”

She’s right—but please don’t call *The Atlantic* and dial my extension to share your ideas about this word fugitive.

Send words that serve Paul Kintner’s or Harriet Reisen’s purposes to Word Fugitives, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114 or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by April 30. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you’d like *The Atlantic*’s help in finding. Letters become the property of *Word Fugitives* and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment’s correspondents will be sent Drowning Ruth, by Christina Schwarz; Breathing Room, by Peter Davison; and Fast Food Nation, by Eric Schlosser.



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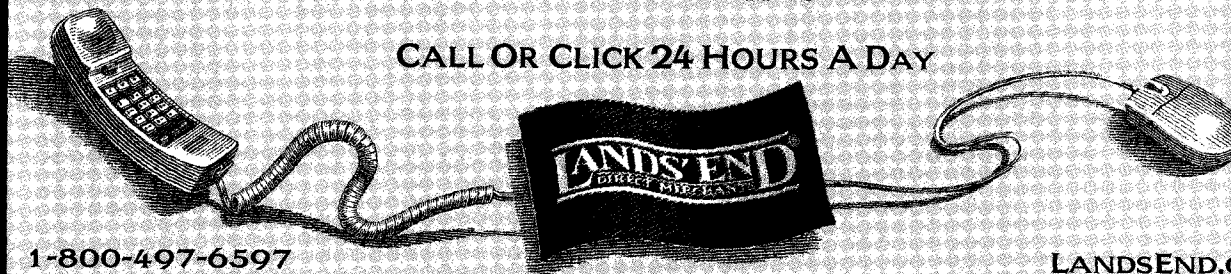
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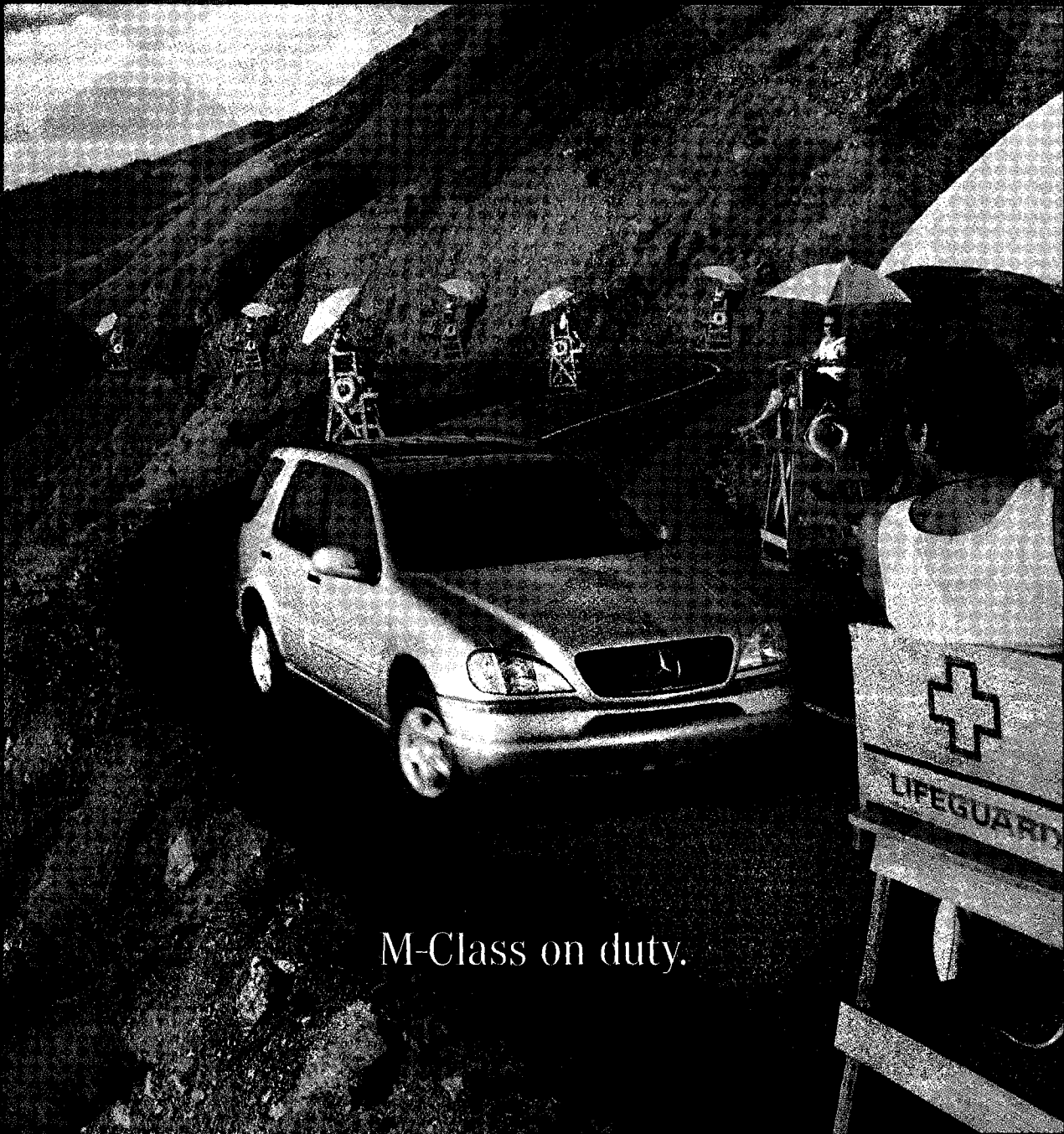
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